

## BIOGRAPHY OF BYRON REED

The name Byron Reed is intimately interwoven with the early history of Omaha.

Born in Darien, New York on March 12, 1829 to Alexander and Betsy Reed, Byron Reed was a descendant of the Puritan family of "Reade." The family moved to the territory of Wisconsin in 1842 and settled in a farm area which soon became known as "Reed Territory."

At the age of sixteen, young Byron Reed became a telegraph operator and moved to Ohio. When the act of Congress organizing the territory of Nebraska was passed in 1854, Byron Reed left Ohio and headed for Nebraska.

Byron Reed settled in Omaha in 1856, two years after the town was founded. Shortly after his arrival, he established the first real estate office in Omaha. In 1865 Reed opened a new office in a small building at 212 South 14th Street. Some years later this was replaced with a substantial brick building.

In April, 1862 Byron Reed married Mary M. Perkins, the daughter of V. C. Perkins, a settler of Pottawattamie County, Iowa. The couple first lived in a small house at 16th and Dodge Streets, where the old post office was later built. In 1875 the couple built a new home on the outskirts of town, high on the hill at 25th and Dodge Streets. It was in this new home that Byron Reed's valuable collections grew through the years. The Reeds had three children.

During his lifetime, Byron Reed held numerous city offices. He was elected to the office of city clerk of Omaha in 1860 and served for six terms in succession. In 1863 he was elected county clerk for the term of two years, having served the previous term as deputy. He was later elected councilman, representing the fourth ward in 1871, and he was president of the city council in 1872.

Byron Reed died in his home in 1891. Mrs. Reed eventually moved to the new "Gold Coast" residential area on 36th Street. She died more than 40 years after her husband's death, at the age of 97.





## Coin Collection's Home Is Too Secure

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 mill any interested party who wishes to view it?"

Melvin D. Stark, 4124 N. 62nd, assistant curator at Boys' Town's PhilaMatic Center and president of the Omaha Coin Club, said club members "generally feel that the Byron Reed coin collection should be better located."

"The club will do anything it can to help," he said. "The present showcase equipment is quite antiquated, and we've talked of trying to spearhead a drive to get new display equipment which would show off the coins to better advantage."

### Display Important

He said the coins at Boys' Town are "not worth a fraction" of those in the Byron Reed collection, but that their display in

turning wall frames makes them "much more enjoyable to look at."

Dr. J. Hewitt Judd, 680 N. 56th, Omaha Coin Club member and a past president, recommended obtaining a legal opinion as a first step toward creating the way for a transfer of the collection.

"There needs to be a clear-cut picture of just what could be done," said Dr. Judd. "One way might be for the city attorney to provide the Library Board with an opinion on the matter."

He said he discussed the subject once with Isaac W. Carpenter, Jr., 517 S. 37th, whose wife, Elizabeth, is a Byron Reed heir, "and I didn't run into any objection then. I would be glad to talk to Mrs. Carpenter. I think it's just a matter of getting papers drawn up—perhaps a quit claim deed—and having the heirs sign."

The Carpenters are vacationing in Florida and could not be reached. Dr. Judd also named Mrs. Jane J. Best, wife of Dr. R. Russell Best, 722 N. 57th, as a Byron Reed heir. Mrs. Best told The SUN another heir, Mrs. Philip Ayers, a sister of Mrs. Carpenter, is a resident of Alhambra, Calif.

"I've heard that one of the objections the library has for keeping the collection," said Mrs. Best, "is that it is difficult to keep it properly guarded. I firmly believe the collection should be displayed where it will be most appreciated."

A. E. Heber, described by Stark as one of the country's leading mail-order coin dealers, told The SUN he "would be enthusiastic" about any possibility of moving the collection to Joslyn Museum. Heber operates a coin shop at 4514 N. 36th.

"Joslyn has the space and can provide a much better display,"

he said. "There is also a fire danger at the library." "venture" he said he would not "venture a guess" on the worth of the Byron Reed collection.

"Coin prices have skyrocketed in the past five years," he said. "Early proof sets with gold coins a few years ago were worth \$500 or \$1,000; today would bring perhaps \$5,000. A complete set of gold dollars (\$1 gold pieces of 1879-1890 vintage), 10 years ago would sell for about \$3,500; today maybe \$35,000. These are examples. Each coin up there would have to be appraised according to today's market."

He said the value of a rare 1804 silver dollar in the Reed collection is "problematical," but added that one 1894 dollar brought \$28,000 in 1959 and another \$29,000 in 1961. "That's how prices shoot up," he said.

### Publicized Rarity

Stark says the library's 1804 silver dollar is one of only 14 still known to be in existence.

"This coin is one of the most publicized rarities in the whole United States series," he said.

While Stark estimates the value of the Byron Reed collection at close to a million dollars, he says he couldn't be sure. "I'm no expert. But I do know the collection is full of coins which are extremely rare and these are worth thousands of dollars."

Byron Reed, who arrived in Omaha from Ohio in 1855, inherited his interest in old coins from his father, from whom he obtained many old and rare pieces. Later as his Byron Reed Company grew with the city he began authorizing coin dealers in New York to bid for him at auction sales of rare coins. His frequent business trips to New York brought him in contact with many numismatists.



## Color Slides Of Byron Reed Coins Highlight NNA Education Program

Special color slides of selected coins from the famed Byron Reed collection formed the educational program at the Nebraska Numismatic Association Convention in Hotel Lincoln, at Lincoln, with Al Moore, Omaha, who had taken the pictures, giving an explanation of the coins.

Moore said the Reed collection is now in the process of being cataloged by officers of the Omaha Coin Club in the library there. It is expected to be placed in the American Numismatic Association headquarters building if erected in Omaha.

Moore filled in for Dr. J. Hewitt Judd who was scheduled to be the speaker but was unable to be present for the convention because of the loss of his coins by robbery recently.

There were approximately 100 slides showing the obverse and reverse of the following items: Fractional currency in frames;

a view of the numismatic books available in the Omaha library and autographs from the Reed collection; a New England schilling, first coin struck in North America.

The restrike of Continental dollar; restrike of 1861 Confederate cent by Robert Lovett Jr.; restrike of Confederate half; the 1793 half cent, smallest coin struck in U. S.; 1836 half cent restrike n Proof; 1848 half cent; 1793 large cent, wreath type; restrike of 1804 large cent; a pattern one cent piece of 1855; the 1856 Flying Eagle cent, not an authorized Mint issue.

1877 Indian Head cent; Mint errors of cupped cents; 1796 quarter; restrike of 1827 quarter; a colonial Washington piece, the 1792 silver half dollar; 1796 half dollar, 16 stars; 1797 half dollar, 15 stars; 1853-O half dollar; the first U. S. silver dollar; the 1804 dollar, "king" of U. S.

rarities.

1836 Gobrecht dollar; 1839 Gobrecht dollar as pattern and variations; Proof restrike of 1851 dollar; \$2½ gold pieces, two types; other \$2½ gold through 1808; 1826 \$2½ gold, reduced size; 1875 \$3 gold in Proof; 1879 \$4 gold stella; 1795 \$5 gold (two varieties); other \$5 gold including 1826, 1828, 1829 small date and 1829 large date; 1795 \$10 gold; 1798 \$10 gold; \$20 gold, U.S. assay office; Moffat-Humbert \$50 gold slug.

Other slides included medals, medallions and tokens including the 100th anniversary of the inauguration of George Washington as first president; ancient coins; Swedish plate money; the largest medal—the Waterloo carrying portraits of the King of England, King of Germany, Emperor of Austria and the Emperor

## Byron Reed Collection Includes Over 13,000 Pieces; Many Rare

The Byron Reed collection, valued at \$1½ million, which is to be on permanent loan to the American Numismatic Association if it builds its proposed home and headquarters in Omaha, Nebr., is presently only partially displayed at the Omaha Public Library due to lack of space, according to a release from the library.

The entire collection includes over 8,000 coins and medals, 1,000 autographs and 5,000 bank notes and other pieces of paper currency, according to the library.

The display is currently arranged primarily by country and by date. Special emphasis is given to U. S. coins (including Colonials), ancient Greek and Roman coins, coins of modern European countries and U. S. patterns and trial pieces. Many of the U. S. coins are in Proof.

Among the coins in the U. S. series are a 1785 Immune Columbia cent, 1792 Washington silver half dollar, 1804 silver dollar and 1841 quarter eagle.

Following the regular U. S. series is a display of private gold coins, many of the pioneer West, the release says. Among them are the 1851 Augustus Humbert

\$50 octagon, Mormon coins, the Dubosq \$5 piece and the "Pike's Peak" \$5 and \$10 pieces of Clark, Gruber and Co.

Among the more than 400 U. S. pattern and trial pieces are a number of rare and scarce items, the release states.

"Many of the Greek city-states are represented by coins in the first of the four cabinets devoted to the Ancient world. Of particular interest here is the tetradrachm of Naxos and the series of coins from Syracuse showing many types of coiffure," the release reports.

"The outstanding rarity among the Egyptian coins," the release continues, "is the silver coin of Cleopatra VII, of which only four or five specimens are known."

"The display of Roman coins is particularly noteworthy because it represents an unusually complete collection of Roman emperors in all denominations."

The library has arranged the coins of medieval and modern Europe in five cabinets, which provide a portrait gallery of the rulers of Europe.

Included among the many coins of this period are "dollar-size" coins of many European coun-

tries from the 17th to 19th centuries, to the Swedish plate money of 1743, the Napoleon five franc piece issued during "the 100 days," the "wild man thalers" of Brunswick and many gold coins.

Byron Reed, who bequeathed his collection of coins, autographs and books to the city of Omaha, came as a young man from Ohio in 1855, one year following the incorporation of the city.

Throughout Omaha's early history, Reed was a familiar and active leader in civic affairs. He established the first real estate firm in the city, one which is still in existence, and he surveyed much land for the early settlers.

From 1860 to 1866, he was county clerk and in 1872 he was president of the city council. In his will he also gave to the city most of the land on which the Omaha Public library was built. The library opened its doors to the public in 1894.

MENTION "COIN WORLD" IN  
ANSWERING ANY AD!

4/7/65



# Omaha Library Board Discusses Possible Sale Of Reed Collection

COIN WORLD  
5-3-72

The Byron Reed coin collection, estimated to be worth more than \$1 million, may be converted into dollars to help finance a new main library in downtown Omaha, Nebr. The collection, willed to the Omaha Public Library by the pioneer realtor of the city in 1891, contains a virtually complete set of U.S. coinage issued during the first 96 years of existence of the U.S. Mint, among the 8,000 coins and medals of which it is comprised.

According to a by-line story in the Omaha World-Herald by Mary McGrath, the library board meeting on April 12, expressed its willingness to sell the collection for a "reasonable" price, if the money earned is applied to the proposed new library, estimated to cost \$6 million.

Three coin dealers who attended the meeting said they wished to make a joint offer to buy the coins. Heirs of Byron Reed, who also donated the land on which the present downtown library stands, have approved of the sale of the collection to Lyn F. Knight of Cherokee, Iowa, one of the three dealers, according to the attorney who represents both the heirs and the coin dealers.

Many legal questions remain to be answered before the recently suggested proposal for sale of the collection can be carried out. Roger Stanway, one of two Omaha legal department staff members at the library board meeting on April 12, said it would be necessary to determine if city property can be sold on a negotiated sale, or if it must be placed on public auction. The legal staff, he said, will also restudy the Reed will.

Milton Abrahams, board president, reminded board members that final decision affecting the coin collection must be made by the city council since the coins are city property.

The board agreed to let the dealers inspect the 8,000 coins and medals with representatives of the library and city present. The dealers estimated it will take two or three days. An appraiser not involved in the transaction should evaluate the coins for the library Abrahams said, adding that the city council would have to approve such an appraisal. Once the dealers make an offer the board will make a recommendation on it to the city council he said.

Dealers who join Knight in seeking to buy the collection are Fred Sweeney of Kansas City, Mo. and Gary Sturtridge of Kansas City, Kan. The dealers and heirs got together through the law firm of Morsman, Fike, Sawtell, and Davis according to Joseph Polack, an attorney with the firm. The heirs' agreement to sell was drawn up by the firm and a copy of the signed document is to be forwarded to the library board. Heirs include Mrs. R. Russell Best of Omaha.

In discussing the dealers' financial ability to bid for the coins Polack told the board that two of the dealers last year bought two coin collections with a total value of \$425,000. Holmes State Bank of Kansas City, Kan., has loaned the dealers money for prior transactions and was given as a reference, the attorney said.

Knight told the board it would be in its favor to sell the collection before late summer or early fall. At that time, he said a \$25 million coin collection is to go on sale in New York and if it contains duplicates of the Byron Reed collection the Reed coins' value could drop. Ask for more specifics for the New York sale Knight said he learned about it through a coin dealer's publication but he couldn't say whose collection it is.

Several of the library board members said they would like to consider a public auction of the coins as well as a negotiated

sale to one bidding group. After the meeting, Abrahams said he would place the value of the coin collection at well in excess of \$1 million. A partial evaluation of the coins was made about five years ago by a group of Omaha Numismatists, and the value of these coins is placed at \$600,000. Their value has appreciated considerably since then.

The Reed collection includes what is considered one of the four or five best collections of U.S. coins in the country, library director Frank Gibson said.

The heirs' agreement is believed to clear the way for selling the coins. Though the Reed will stated that the collection is for permanent display by the library, it failed to make any provision for sale, purchase or exchange of the items in the collection, according to Omaha Public Library librarian Edith Tobitt, who presented a paper on the collection at the annual Convention of the American Numismatic Association in Chicago in 1929.

The absence of any such provision, Miss Tobitt observed at that time, had virtually stifled the future growth of the collection. With the exception of some commemorative coins and a few medals, no additions had been made to it since Mr. Reed died in 1891.

Miss Tobitt did reveal, however, that the collection is

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# Reed Collection...

## FROM PAGE 1

one of the oldest extant in America, having been started by the donor's father, whose "son early learned of the joy which comes to the collector."

"Naturally," she pointed out, "the boy's enthusiasm for collecting was limited by the limits of his income and the son's collection did not grow large, but later, because of the growth of his city and the possibilities for making money, he was able to add many very valuable pieces."

Mr. Reed was not a native of Omaha, but came there in 1855 from Warren, Ohio, to which his father, William Reade had emigrated from New England. He became Omaha's first real estate broker, and served as city and county clerk from 1860 to 1866. He was named president of the Omaha city council in 1872; served as treasurer of the first IOOF lodge, and was an active member of the American Numismatic Society.

Miss Tobitt described the U.S. coins as among the most important, "representing about one fourth of the collection," in number. "The earliest item bears the date 1794, and each year following down and including 1890, is represented by an almost complete group of coins of each date," she reported to the ANA.

"The \$50 gold slugs, the 1875 \$3 gold piece and the 1804 dollar, viewed by your Mr. Zerbe and pronounced by him the most perfect of the 13 known, are among the best items. . .

"I am mentioning coins which this group of experts recognizes as being rare," Miss Tobitt explained to her audience: "But to the uninitiated, as I may call myself, it is the beauty of the coins which makes the strong appeal, and so I make bold to mention as unusual the exquisite gold coins minted in 1866, beginning with the \$1 piece, and

including the \$2½, the \$5 and the \$10. This and the 1875 group are particularly attractive to the speaker."

The librarian also referred to more than 400 pattern and experimental coins in the collection, among which are the \$50 slug in copper, the \$4 in three metals and six types of "ring" dollars. She also mentioned 35 pieces of Pioneer gold, including the Mormon set, the rare Dubosq \$5 and the Pike's Peak \$5 and \$10 pieces.

Second place in the collection was given to the ancient Greek and Roman coins. "Prominent are the shekel series and the 25 types of the widow's mite and about 30 gold coins and medallions of Imperial Rome," the speaker said.

She tallied the Byron Reed bequest to the library as follows: 6,869 coins, 1,280 medals, 832 autographs, 1,836 books, 3,243 pamphlets, 615 Confederate notes and 2,136 other bank notes.

The medals, displayed in a separate case, include Presidents' medals, Indian Peace medals, Papal medals and medals commemorating important events in history. Among the latter she singled out the St. Gaudens George Washington medal, struck in 1889 to mark the centennial of the first presidential inauguration.

It was the Byron Reed collection which helped to place Omaha in a front-runner position at one point during the American Numismatic Association's search for a home and headquarters in 1965. The collection was offered to the ANA on a permanent loan basis, if it chose the Omaha site.

"This vote for Omaha is contingent upon our board being able to reach formal agreement with Omaha representatives to implement the offer they made," public relations officer Glenn B. Smedley said at the time. "The building committee has the authority, from the board, to make other arrangements if Omaha cannot carry through with its proposal."



## Byron Reed Collection Sale Gets New Twist At Omaha

A new element was added recently to the contention surrounding the proposed sale of the famed Byron Reed coin collection by the city of Omaha, Neb., when an attorney for five heirs of the collector philanthropist announced that they also might benefit from the sale.

The collection, valued at more than \$1 million, was presented to the city by Reed in 1891, together with a donation of land on which to build a downtown library, where the coins were to be displayed forever after, for the benefit of the public.

Faced now with the need to build a new downtown library, the Library board received an offer from three coin dealers to

purchase the collection, with the returns from the sale to finance construction of the new building. The proposal was met with spirited opposition by both local and state numismatic organization. A counter proposal was made in June to sell the collection at public auction, in the belief that a greater sum could be realized in this manner.

The Library board in April had received approval of the sale of the collection to three dealers headed by Lyn F. Knight of Cherokee, Iowa, by the heirs, who were represented by attorney Joseph Polack. Their agreement to a public auction was sought next, to avoid any legal complications, if this course of disposal were

taken. Responding to this request, Polack revealed that the heirs, through an agreement with Knight, were to have shared in the income from the purchase and resale of the collection. He declined, however, to indicate the amount they were to receive.

"Since the Library board has decided on a public auction," Polack said, "it appears the heirs' agreement to have the city sell the collection to the dealers has no practical application."

He added that he "presumed the heirs would expect to participate financially," if the collection were put up for public auction by the city.

Milton Abrahams, Library board president, said no member of the board was aware that

the heirs had made such an arrangement with any of the dealers involved when the sale was discussed in April and June. When pressed as to why this fact had not been revealed, Polack, who also represents the three coin dealers, said: "The question was never asked."

Dr. R. Russell Best, the husband of the only Reed heiress still residing in Omaha, denied any knowledge of such an arrangement. Other heirs include Erna Reed Ayres of Altadena, Calif.; Col. Harry Montgomery Jr., Gulfport, Miss.; Reed Norris, Glendora, Calif. and Reed Montgomery of Durango, Mexico.

Abrahams said he had not yet received an opinion from the city legal department on whether the heirs' agreement is needed to sell the coins, or whether they have any legal claim on them.

He said he does not know how the board would feel about pro-

viding the heirs with a share of the returns.

"If any agreement is reached, it will be done at a public meeting where everyone will know what is going on," Abrahams promised, adding that the city council would have to make the final decision, because the coins are city property.



## Reed Coin Collection's Sale Waits Further Board Action

Five Byron Reed heirs may benefit financially if the City of Omaha sells the Reed Coin Collection to help finance a new downtown library. Joseph Polack, attorney for the heirs, said Thursday.

The collection, given to the city in 1891 by Reed, is valued at more than \$1 million. Library Board members have been seeking to sell it.

At the board's April meeting, the heirs sent a statement through Polack saying they agreed to the city's selling the coins to three dealers, headed by Lyn F. Knight of Cherokee, Ia.

The board in June voted to go back to the heirs and ask their agreement to sell the collection at a public auction because it believes more money can be raised that way.

### To Avoid Hurdle

The heirs' agreement has been sought to avoid a possible legal hurdle regarding the Reed will. The will gave the coins, books and the land for the downtown library with the provision a library be built and the library and coins should "forever thereafter be used and displayed for the benefit of the public."

Polack said the heirs, through an agreement with Knight, were to have shared in the income from the three dealers' purchase and resale of the collection, although he declined to say how much would have been involved.

"Since the library board has decided on a public auction, it appears the heirs' agreement to have the city sell the collection to the dealers has no practical application," Polack said.

However, he said, "I presume the heirs would expect to participate financially" if the city puts the collection up to public auction.

### Question Not Asked

Dr. R. Russell Best, whose wife is one of the heirs, said: "We know nothing about this."

The other heirs are Erna Reed Ayres of Altadena, Calif.,

Col. Harry Montgomery Jr. of Gulfport, Miss.; Reed Norris of Glendora, Calif. and Reed Montgomery of Durango, Mexico.

Polack was asked why the fact the heirs were to share had not been brought out in the presentation to the Library Board.

"The question was never asked," Polack said.

"We assumed that was understood, but evidently the Library Board didn't understand," said the attorney, whose firm also represents the three coin dealers.

Milton Abrahams, Library Board president, said the City Legal Department has not yet given its opinion on whether the heirs' agreement is needed to sell the coins or whether the heirs have any legal claim on them.

### Wrote to Heirs

Abrahams said no member of the board knew that the heirs had an arrangement with dealer Knight when the sale was discussed at April and June board meetings.

"On July 5, I wrote to each of the heirs seeking their authorization for a sale at public auction, pointing out that the board was convinced after careful consideration . . . that a public auction should be held rather than a sale to a single purchaser," Abrahams said.

"I have not received any response from any of the heirs directly, but I have since learned from a representative of theirs of the financial arrangement they had with Mr. Knight," he said.

The matter will be submitted at the board's next meeting, he said.

Abrahams said he does not know how the board would feel about giving the heirs a share.

"If any agreement is reached, it will be done at a public meeting where every one will know what is going on," continued Abrahams, adding that the City Council would have to make any final decision because the coins are city property.

## Coin Bidder Loses Status

A coin dealer, believed to be one of three bidding on the Omaha Public Library's Byron Reed Coin Collection, has been expelled from the American Numismatic Association.

Edward C. Rochette, executive director of the association, said in a telephone interview Thursday from Colorado Springs, Colo., that Fred Sweeney Jr. of Kansas City, Mo., has been expelled for violation of the association's code of ethics for dealers. The association is a nationally recognized organization made up of dealers, collectors and coin fanciers.

Rochette said that as far as he knows, Sweeney is the same dealer who, with two other dealers, is bidding on the Reed collection.

### Sweeney Hangs Up

Fred Sweeney Jr. was called in Kansas City and asked to verify that he was the same man bidding on the Omaha coin.

"Find out from some other channels. Besides it is none of your business," Sweeney said and hung up. Called back immediately, his office said Sweeney was out.

Lyn F. Knight of Cherokee, Ia., another of the dealers bidding on the coins, could not be reached for comment.

The association's board of directors has agreed to reconsider Sweeney's case at its August meeting, Rochette said. The review decision was reached after the May issue of the association's journal, listing expelled members, was prepared.

### Voluntary Organization

Rochette said the association is a voluntary organization and being dropped from membership does not affect a dealer's legal right to conduct his business.

It does mean that the dealer cannot attend the national convention or list himself as an association member.

Most coin dealers belong to the association, Rochette said, adding that the organization strives to maintain standards so people can buy coins and be assured of quality.

Rochette said the Byron Reed coins are a "fabulous collection and it is a shame that officials feel they must be sold, which probably will mean the collection will be broken up."

### Joint Offer

The possibility of selling the coins came up at the April 12 Library Board meeting when Knight, Sweeney and Gary Sturridge of Kansas City, Kan., said they want to make a joint offer on the coins.

The board said it is willing to sell the collection, valued at more than \$1 million, to help raise money for a new downtown library, and agreed to let the dealers inspect the coins.

At the same meeting the Byron Reed heirs gave their approval to selling the coins to Knight, according to an attorney for the heirs.

Joseph Polack, an Omaha attorney representing the dealers, said the dealers have completed their inspection of the coins and are still estimating the value of the collection.

The date for the Library Board's next meeting, when more action may be taken on the sale, has not been set.



December 21, 1972

## Reed's Coins Will Be Sold For Library

By David Thompson

Heirs have agreed to the sale of the Byron Reed coin collection by the city to raise money for a new downtown library.

The city would pay \$50,000 to the attorney for the five heirs, according to an agreement signed by the heirs and submitted to the city.

The Library Board is expected to meet Tuesday morning to consider a recommendation on the proposal, and the City Council is scheduled to hear the recommendation Tuesday afternoon.

The agreement would have to be approved by the council before it could take effect, City Atty. Herbert M. Fittle said Thursday.

The library board earlier backed the proposal to sell the collection to raise money for a new building. The value of the coins has been placed at a minimum of \$1 million.

An appraisal would be made before the collection would be sold by the city, Fittle said.

The proposed agreement calls for the city to pay \$25,000 at the time it approves the agreement. The other \$25,000 would be paid at the time of the sale or within a year of the approval, whichever comes first.

The heirs who have signed the agreement are Mrs. R. Russell Best, Edna R. Ayers, Harry G. Montgomery Jr., Reed Montgomery and Thomas R. Norris.

Mayor Leahy said Thursday that he favors the sale because the cost of providing the necessary security to display it would be excessive.

Reed, a pioneer Omahan, left the collection to the city for display at the Municipal Library.

The collection has not been displayed for several years. It has been kept in a bank vault.

## Downtown Need 'Is Still Urgent'

# Board Still for Coin Sale—If Needed to Get Library

By Mary McGrath

In the sell-don't sell debate over the Byron Reed coin collection, a majority of the Omaha Public Library Board still votes to sell if that's what it takes to get a new downtown library.

The board touched off debate, now involving the City Council, mayor and coin enthusiasts, when it recommended sale of the coins—valued at well in excess of \$1 million—to help finance a new downtown library.

The stand to sell, if necessary, was taken by seven board members polled by The World-Herald. The other two members could not be reached.

Those interviewed also agreed, although some had reservations, that a display for

into the new library if other funds were found for the building project.

"The basic need is for a new, modern, efficient library in downtown Omaha," said Milton R. Abrahams, library board president.

"The need is urgent. If selling the coins is the best way, then they should be sold."

Michael E. D. Malone said he doubts the coins will be sold, and thinks they should be only if that is the only way to get the new building.

Several board members said they would not object to displaying the coins in the proposed library if the cost, including security, would not be a burden.

Board member N. Phillips Dodge 3d said checks should be made in other cities to see

and a first-class facility should be planned.

"Omaha can only be as active a community as its library is strong," said Mrs. Richard Hiller. "We are after the best library we can get, not a mediocre one."

"Mr. Jacobberger's thinking is Victorian. Meeting rooms would have a number of diversified uses, such as for study purposes and community functions," she said.

Clarence Teal, chairman of the board's building committee, said plans are in such preliminary stages that it isn't known if meeting rooms would be included. "I think there ought to be a meeting room," he continued.

Board members also dis-

comb, City Council candidate, who said he questioned spending millions on a new library when the exterior walls of the present building appear sound.

Remodeling would not solve the space problem which is keeping the library from developing the depth and breadth it should have in its collections, members said.

Attempts to replace or enlarge the building go back to 1909. The Omaha City-Wide Planning Committee in 1945 described the library as "deplorable and hopelessly inadequate" and the Omaha Plan in 1956 called it "a disgrace to the city."

Consultation with several architects showed remodeling costs would be prohibitive,



# Coin Sale Step Closer

By David Beeder

Legal clouds blocking the city's sale of a coin collection worth more than one million dollars were cleared Tuesday by the City Council.

Before the 6-1 vote, the council heard an offer from the curator of the Boys Town Museum who said the institution would like to display the Byron Reed coin collection as a tourist attraction.

Instead, the council voted to pay \$50,000 to Reed's heirs in exchange for their release of any claim on the collection, given to the city in 1894 with a stipulation it be kept forever on display in the public library.

## Swigart Against

The city's claim was clouded in 1966 when the library, after two robbery attempts, transferred the coins to a bank vault out of public view.

Dissenting in the vote to pay the heirs was Councilman Warren Swigart who argued against quick sale of the 8,000 coins.

"Suppose we have something precious here for generations to come?" he said, after hearing Curator Melvin Stark of Boys Town.

The vote set the stage for introduction, scheduled Jan. 23, of a resolution to pay more than \$200,000 for a professional appraisal, if needed, followed by public auction of the coins.

Appraisers who arrange sales usually take 20 per cent of the proceeds, the council was advised by Stark.

## Proceeds for Library

However, most of the proceeds would be used to help finance a \$6 million library replacing the present one built in the 1890s for \$212,000 on land donated by Reed.

Councilman Arthur Bradley, who advocates quick sale of the coins, said he would introduce the resolution calling for a public auction.

"Will the people have more benefit from a coin collection hidden in a bank vault or will they benefit more from a new library?" he said.

Councilman L. K. Smith said he will counter Bradley's resolution with an ordinance making sale of the coin collection a referendum issue in a citywide

## 'Unique Collection'

Boys Town's Stark pleaded with the council against breaking up the Reed collection.

"It is unique," he said and urged the council to find other ways to finance a new library.

Stark, who said he spoke for members of the Omaha Coin Club as well as Boys Town, described the Reed collection as the third best in the United States, ranking behind the Eliasberg Collection in Baltimore and

Please turn to Page 2, Col. 1

# City Council Agrees To Buy Coin Title

Continued from Page 1

the collection in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

While the Eliasberg Collection has nearly all U.S. coins ever minted, Stark said the Reed collection has coins not found elsewhere.

It includes some dimes and half dimes minted from silverware owned by George and Martha Washington, he said.

## 'Title Worth It'

The Reed coins, which Stark helped catalogue in 1966, also include an 1804 silver dollar worth an estimated \$100,000.

Another coin club member, Robert Hilt of Millard, also addressed the council, saying:

"Don't sell the collection until you find out what you have and unless you intend to sell, you're paying \$50,000 for nothing."

Council President H. F. Jacobberger, who said he frequently

viewed the collection as a youngster, told Hilt "it is worth \$50,000" for the city to get clear title to the collection.

## 'Different Age'

He said public display of the coins no longer is possible without expensive security measures.

"It was a different age when I was a kid," he said. "People didn't swipe things."

On the offer from Boys Town, Stark said he had been authorized to request the coin collection for a secure display on loan from the city. He also indicated the institution might soon have money from a will to bid on the collection.

On the proposal to loan the collection, Councilman John Rittums said the city might be interested if Boys Town would offer to loan the city \$2 million interest free.



# Vote to Pay Heirs Puts Coin Sale Step Close

By David Beeder

Legal clouds blocking the city's sale of a coin collection worth more than \$1 million were cleared Tuesday by the City Council.

Before the 6-1 vote, the council heard an offer from the curator of the Boys Town Museum who said the institution would like to display the Byron Reed coin collection as a tourist attraction.

Instead, the council voted to pay \$50,000 to Reed's heirs in exchange for their release of any claim on the collection, given to the city in 1994 with a stipulation it be kept forever on display in the public library.

## Swigart Against

The city's claim was clouded in 1966 when the library, after two robbery attempts, transferred the coins to a bank vault out of public view.

Dissenting in the vote to pay the heirs was Councilman Warren Swigart who argued against quick sale of the 3,000 coins.

"Suppose we have something precious here for generations to come?" he said, after hearing Curator Melvin Stark of Boys Town.

The vote set the stage for introduction, scheduled Jan. 23, of a resolution to pay more than \$200,000 for a professional appraisal, if needed, followed by public auction of the coins.

## Proceeds for Library

Appraisers who arrange sales usually take 20 per cent of the proceeds, the council was advised by Stark.

However, most of the proceeds would be used to help finance a \$6 million library replacing the present one built in the 1890s for \$212,000 on land donated by Reed.

Councilman Arthur Bradley, who advocates quick sale of the coins, said he would introduce the resolution calling for a public auction.

"Will the people have more benefit from a coin collection hidden in a bank vault or will they benefit more from a new library?" he said.

Councilman L. K. Smith said he will counter Bradley's resolution with an ordinance making sale of the coin collection a referendum issue in a citywide election.

## 'Unique Collection'

Boys Town's Stark pleaded with the council against breaking up the Reed collection.

"It is unique," he said and urged the council to find other ways to finance a new library.

Stark, who said he spoke for members of the Omaha Coin Club as well as Boys Town, described the Reed collection as the third best in the United States, ranking behind the Eliasberg Collection in Baltimore and the collection in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

While the Eliasberg Collection has nearly all U.S. coins ever minted, Stark said the Reed collection has coins not found elsewhere.

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FR-12-29-72

## Coins Payment Up to Council

An ordinance calling for payment of \$25,000 exchange for clear title to the Byron Reed collection, reportedly worth more than \$1 million, is on the agenda for Tuesday's City Council meeting.

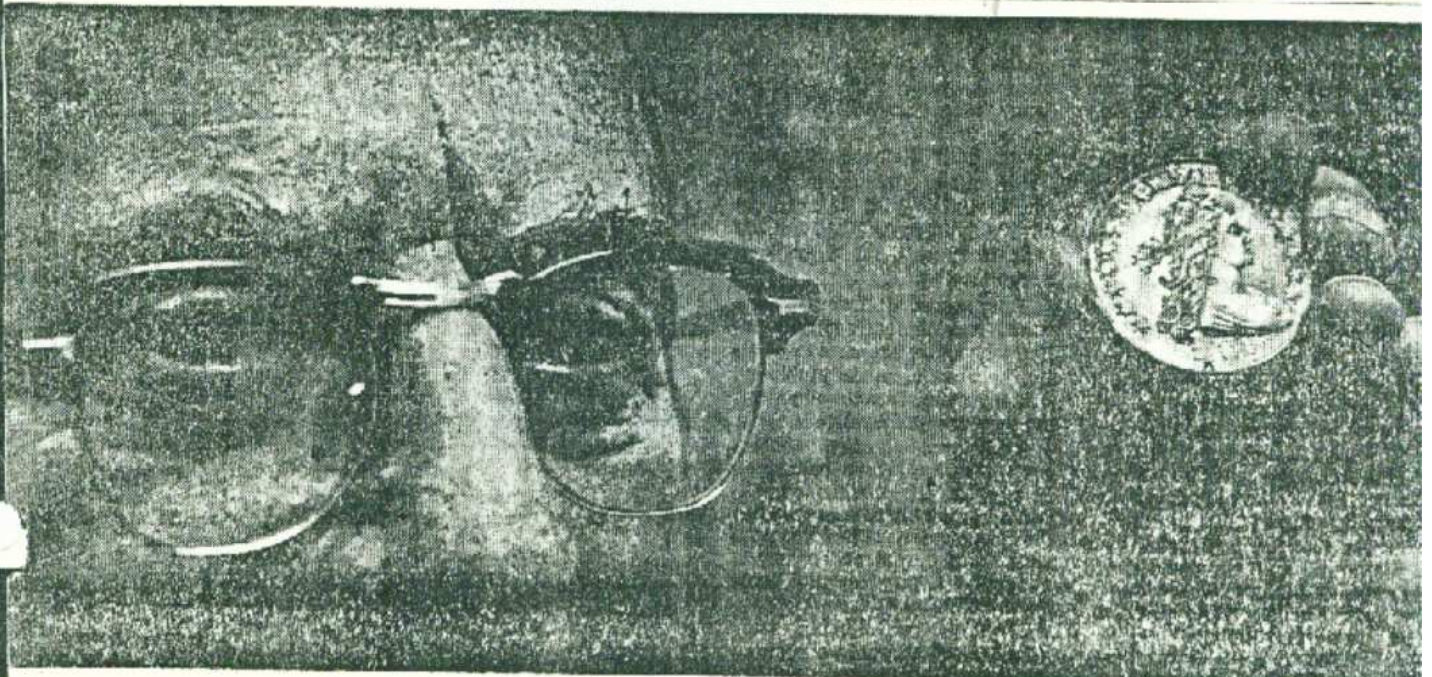
The council has adopted a resolution calling for two payments of \$25,000, one now and one within 12 months, to ensure the city's right to sell the collection and use the proceeds to build a new library. Another ordinance providing for the second \$25,000 will be introduced later.

Reed, pioneer Omaha real estate man, willed the collection to the city in 1894 with a stipulation that it be kept forever on public display in the library.

The collection was removed from public display and placed in a bank vault in 1966 after attempts were made to steal it from the library.

Other business before the council includes a Planning Board request for approval of Douglas County sanitary landfill northwest of 126th and State Streets. It would replace a landfill that will be closed for park construction between 112th and Maple Streets.

B Sunday World-Herald, Omaha, Dec. 31, 1972



Abrahams holds most valuable coin . . . 1804 dollar worth \$100,000.

—World-Herald Photo by Robert Pa



# Coin Buffs Plan Fight Over Famed Collection

By David Beeder

"It's a great tragedy for the people of Omaha," Aubrey Bebee says.

"I would hate to see the collection broken up and sold," Melvin Stark adds.

"This is a one-way street," according to Robert Hilt. "And you go down it only once."

Bebee, a rare coin dealer, Stark, a museum curator, and Hilt, a coin collector, are distressed because the city plans to sell a city-owned coin collection that has been locked in a bank vault since 1966 because the city can't afford to protect it.

It is the famed Byron Reed collection, given to the city by the pioneer real estate man in 1894 on condition it be kept on public display forever in the public library.

Barring some unexpected turn of events, the collection will be seen in Omaha for the last time when it is placed on an auction block in 1973 to yield more than \$1 million to help build a new \$6 million main library building.

For members of the City Council, the decision is whether to order the sale by council action or let voters decide in a referendum.

## For the Voters

Councilman Arthur D. Bradley Jr. favors council action and intends to introduce a resolution Jan. 23 calling for quick sale.

Councilman L. K. Smith disagrees with Bradley and will introduce an ordinance making the future of the coin collection a question for Omaha voters to decide.

Members of the Library Board also advocate sale of the coins.

Before Tuesday's City Council meeting, Library Board Chairman Milton Abrahams called a special meeting to put the board on record as favoring a sale after a legal question had been resolved.

City Council action followed the same day with the council voting to pay five heirs to the Byron Reed estate \$50,000 to ensure the legality of selling the coins.

Asst. City Atty. Roger Stanway said the city decided to pay the heirs rather than take the question to court because "we were afraid of losing the entire collection."

The Reed heirs agreed, he said, to relinquish any claim on the valuable collection in exchange for \$50,000 — \$25,000 to be paid immediately and \$25,000 to be paid when the coins are sold or within a year, whichever is sooner.

## Tourists

To coin fanciers — such as Bebee, Stark and Hilt — the city's plan will destroy what could have been a great tourist attraction if properly housed in a secure location.

Library Director Frank Gibson decided to remove the coins from public view after two attempts were made to steal the collection.

In one attempt on Aug. 16, 1963, three men

bound and taped three library employees and a policeman before fleeing without the coins which include an 1894 silver dollar worth an estimated \$100,000 and two \$5 gold pieces worth \$45,000 and \$22,000 respectively.

Reed, who arrived in Omaha from Ohio in 1855, inherited many of the old coins from his father, also a coin collector.

After financial success in Omaha, Reed authorized dealers in New York and other cities to bid for him at 19th century auction sales in New York and elsewhere.

Other important U.S. coins in the 8,000-coin collection, which includes foreign coins that never have been counted, are silver dimes or dimes which were among the first coins minted in Philadelphia after the Revolutionary War.

Stark, who is curator of the Boys Town Museum, said they were made from silverware donated to the mint by President George Washington.

"He used Martha's silverware because silver was hard to get in 1792 after the war with England," Stark said.

## Boys Town

Stark, who attended the council meeting with Hilt to argue against the proposed sale, offered the Boys Town Museum as a place for public display. He said the institution would make arrangements to protect the collection.

Bebee and Councilman Warren R. Swigart suggested the coins might be the nucleus of a new museum to be set up in the old Union Pacific Station, a grandiose structure, now empty, which the railroad has offered to the city for \$1.

"It would be a marvelous museum and attract thousands of tourists if properly publicized," Bebee said.

Abrahams and Gibson don't believe the coins are a great attraction.

Gibson compiled figures for the period Aug. 20, 1963 to June 28, 1964 when the collection could be seen on request at the library.

"There were 136 persons asking to see the coins during this period," Gibson said, "compared with 292,800 persons who checked out books."

## Hard to See

Stark argues the coins were hard to see during this period because they were kept behind iron bars and a locked door on the library's third floor.

"You had to hunt up a library employee, usually a young woman who stood on one foot and then another while you tried to look at the coins," Stark said. "It wasn't conducive to leisurely viewing."

To keep the issue in the limelight, Stark and other coin collectors plan to hold at least one public showing of color slides they made of the coins when they were on public display.

"We're going to make a fight of it," he said.



1-3-73

1-5-72

Omaha World-Herald, Wed.

## Bradley to Ask for Coin Appraisal

The city should find out how many coins there are in the Byron Reed collection and how much they are worth, but it shouldn't commit itself to selling them right now, City

Councilman Arthur D. Bradley Jr. said Tuesday.

Bradley said he will introduce a resolution Jan. 23 calling for the appointment of an appraiser for the collection.

Originally he planned to include in the resolution the approval of sale, Bradley said, but he now thinks that the city should consider the value before deciding to sell. That decision can be made later, he said.

An ordinance providing for payment of \$25,000 to Reed heirs was introduced to the council Tuesday, and a public hearing is scheduled next Tuesday. Final action could be taken Jan. 16.

If the collection is sold, the plans call for using the proceeds to help pay the cost of a new downtown library.

## The Public Pulse

The World-Herald must know the name and address of all writers. In some cases writers are permitted to use noms de plume, but writers who permit their names to be published are given preference, other things being equal. Letters criticizing individuals must be signed. Single initial signatures are not acceptable; use either first and last names or two given initials and last name. The World-Herald reserves the right to condense letters.

### Wrong to Sell Coin Collection

It's too bad that certain council members, like Bradley, don't see that the Byron Reed coin collection is so unique it would be a tragedy to break it up.

It doesn't take a great business mind to realize that a public library building depreciates, while the Reed collection continues to appreciate.

So like every other swift move the city has made lately, they will seize the opportunity to get a few quick dollars at the expense of one of the great coin collections in existence. Certain council members probably would sell the "Mona Lisa" to fix the chuck holes in Dodge Street.

I'm sure that if all the great minds of the council get together they can figure out a way to raise money for a new library building without selling the collection.

Richard R. Benolken Jr.

## Smith to Drop Coin-Vote Plan

City Councilman L. K. Smith said Wednesday he has dropped plans to ask voters in the April 3 primary election whether the Byron Reed coin collection should be sold.

Smith said he agrees with Councilman Arthur D. Bradley Jr. that an inventory and appraisal should be made of the collection before a decision is made.

Because it will take about a year to appraise the collection of more than 8,000 coins, Smith said, the referendum will be dropped.

## Ritums: City Shouldn't Sell Reed's Coins

City Councilman John Ritums opposes the sale of the Byron Reed coin collection and he said Thursday the city should not pay for an appraisal of the collection.

Ritums said he has received calls and letters from citizens opposing sale of the city-owned collection.

The council has been told an appraisal would cost about 20 per cent of the value of the collection, and could cost as much as 30 per cent.

If the collection is valued at more than \$1 million, the appraisal cost would be \$200,000 or more, he said.

A local coin-collecting group has offered to conduct an inventory of the collection, estimated at 8,000 coins, he said.

Ritums said he originally considered sale of the collection as a means of raising money to build a downtown library, but now he thinks there are other ways such funds could be raised, notably through federal revenue-sharing.

Ritums said the city should retain the collection and design the new library lobby around the collection.

It would cost about \$50,000 to build theft-proof display cases, Ritums said he was told.

The city might have replicas cast of some of the coins and sell them to persons viewing the collection, he said.

1-4-73



# KETV



# EDITORIAL

January 4, 1973

The Byron Reed Coin Collection is causing considerable controversy with cries of "sell" and "don't sell". Those who would want it sold see its value in the form of at least one million dollars for bricks and mortar in a new library building. Those who say "don't", see a priceless treasure that can never be replaced, so which side do you take? A library, too, can be a priceless asset to the people of a city..... and we certainly need a new one downtown, but libraries can be replaced, and the Byron Reed Collection would be lost forever, and the Reed coins are, in themselves, a classroom of valuable history. In the 1920's the Omaha Librarian noted that hundreds came to see the collection every month and that teachers of Greek and Roman history used it as a supplement to their text books. The collection is living history going back 246 years before Christ to Antiochus the First and Ptolemy the Second, and coins issued by Herod and Pontius Pilate that helped to make the New Testament history. The reigns of the Roman Emperors march before your eyes.....Tiberius, Augustus, Titus, Constantine and on and on. In American history, the near complete collection of coins from the first issue to 1891, make the Reed display even more unique. The history of a young nation is there. Silver coins minted from the silverware of Martha Washington attest to the struggle of a young country just going into business. All this is just one fraction of the stories to be told. Surely, despite security problems, those who say "sell" don't really realize what they have before them, or they wouldn't be so quick to deprive Omaha and its citizens and its future citizens of such a unique gift.



## Sell the Books, Keep Coins

Are we to lose a potential tourist attraction of the magnitude — the Byron Reed collection of rarely seen coins — through the enormous folly of shortsighted city planners? Civic-minded citizens must realize that our future as the cultural center of Nebraska hinges on our ability to save this source of pride and inspiration for us all.

The cost of enshrining it in a new maximum-security museum could easily be met by selling only a fraction of our vast accumulation of neglected library books. The challenge is here; the priorities are clear, and posterity awaits our decision!

Ward Stahmer.

Omaha.

1-9-73

## Library, Museum, Auditorium in One

Omaha.

The cost of heating the Union Station cannot compare with the loss of the coin collection by tearing it up. Buy the station for a buck, take the money the city said they would spend on a new library and remodel the station into a combined library, museum and auditorium, where music groups can perform, free or for a small fee, as they did when it was a station. Display the coin collection in the regal manner it deserves.

Then tear down the old library and make parking. Until there is parking provided downtown, free as in the shopping centers, business will never come back.

Mrs. Earl Nichol.

## Leahy Has 2nd Thought On Coin Sale

Mayor Leahy said Monday he is reconsidering a proposal that the Byron Reed coin collection be sold to raise money for a new downtown library.

Causing him to reconsider is a report in a business magazine which says that during 1972 the value of numismatic collections increased by 225 per cent, and such collections are good hedges against inflation, he said.

With an increase that large, the city might be better off borrowing money to build the library and retaining the more than 8,000 coins, he said.

The sale of the coins was proposed by the Library Board as a means of raising money for a new building.

But some councilmen said last week they would favor setting aside a portion of Omaha's federal revenue sharing funds annually to build a new library.

City Councilman Arthur D. Bradley Jr. has altered a proposed resolution calling for an inventory, appraisal and quick sale of the collection. The alteration eliminates the requirement for a sale. The resolution is to be presented to the council Jan. 23.

## Shift Asked In Reed Pact

1-11-73

City Councilman John Ritums said Thursday he has asked that the proposed agreement with the Byron Reed heirs be modified to cover more than the Reed coin collection.

Ritums said he wants the agreement to cover the land on which the present downtown library is built, the medals, autographs, pamphlets and books in the collection left to the city by Reed.

The councilman said the agreement which the council accepted Dec. 26 covers only the Reed coin collection.

The city has accepted the offer by the five Reed heirs to relinquish all claim to the coin collection in return for payment of \$50,000.

Although the agreement has been accepted, the necessary documents have not yet been signed by the city, Ritums said, and no payment has been made.

The council is scheduled to take action Tuesday on an ordinance that would transfer \$25,000 to pay half the amount to the Reed heirs. The remaining \$25,000 is to be paid when the coin collection is sold or within one year, whichever is sooner, according to the agreement.

## Money to Reed Heirs Opposed by Curator

If the city does not plan to sell the Byron Reed coin collection, it should not pay \$25,000 to the Reed heirs, the curator of the Boys Town Museum told the City Council Tuesday.

The curator, Melvin Stark, who told councilmen two weeks ago that Boys Town would like to display the collection at its museum, questioned the ordinance that would transfer money to pay the heirs.

Under terms of an agreement signed by the five Reed heirs, the city would pay them \$25,000 now and \$25,000 within a year or at the sale of the collection, whichever would be sooner.

City Councilman L. K. Smith said the council was told two weeks ago by an assistant city attorney that Omaha was violating terms of the Reed will by not displaying the large collection at its downtown library.

Payment of the heirs probably would prevent the prospect of a court fight by heirs over the display, Smith said. The coin col-

lection has been in a bank vault since 1966 because of difficulty in protecting it from theft while on display.

Councilman John Ritums said he opposes the sale.

Ritums sought unsuccessfully to have the council postpone until Jan. 23 action on the ordinance that would make \$25,000 available to the heirs.

Ritums said he wanted to be able to vote on the measure, but he would be out of the city on Tuesday. The motion to postpone action lost, 3-2. Four votes are required for postponement. Two councilmen, President F. Jacobberger and Warren Swigart, were out of the city. Voting against postponement were Councilmen Betty Abbott and Arthur D. Bradley Jr.

Stark said that according to a 1929 copy of a numismatic magazine the Reed collection contained 6,869 coins, 1,280 medals, 832 autographs, 1,836 booklets, 3,243 pamphlets, 615 Confederate notes and 2,138 other bank notes.

## Coin Collection Is Lecture Topic

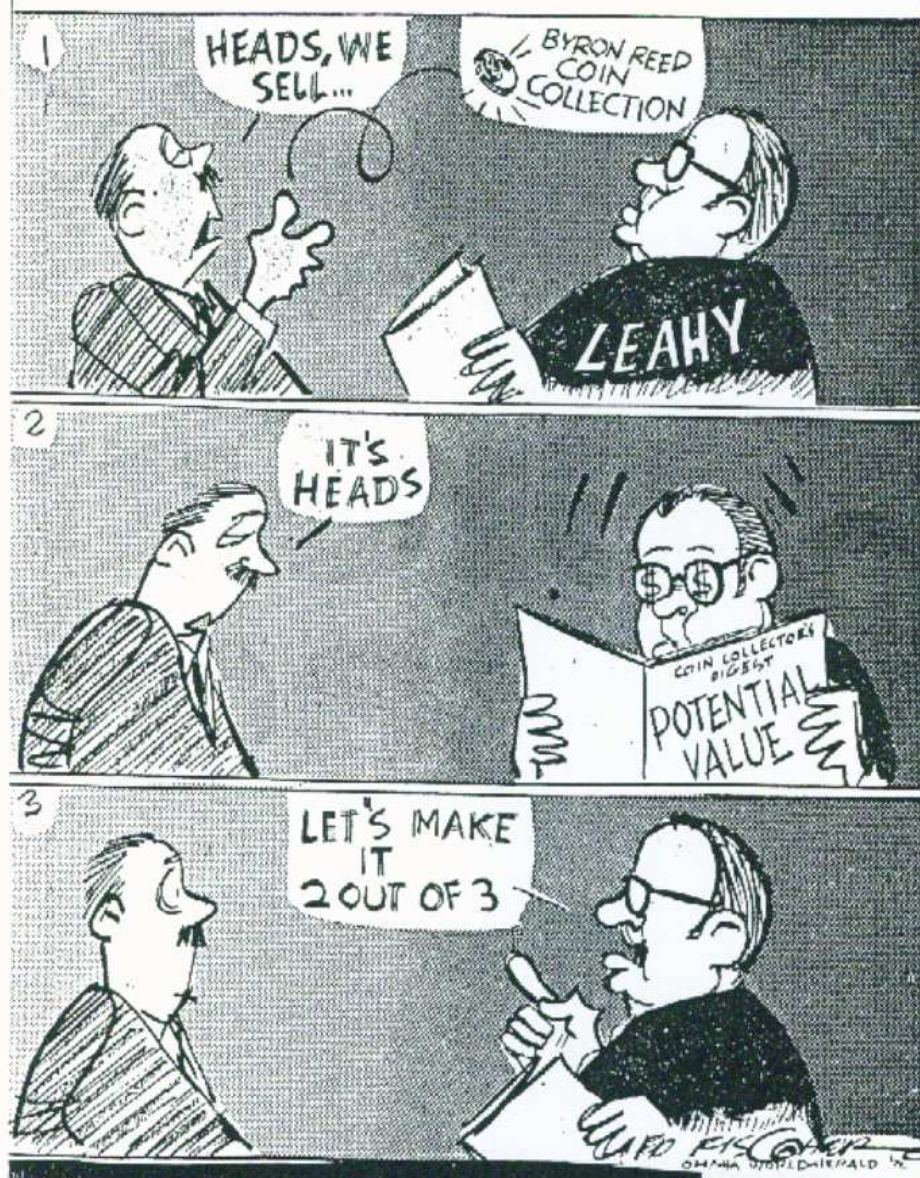
The Byron Reed coin collection, which the city is considering selling, will be the subject of a public lecture at 8 p.m. Friday at Local 22, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, 1336 North Saddle Creek Road.

Alfred Moore, 5220 Ames Avenue, said the program is sponsored by a group of about 12 persons who are interested in having the city keep the collection, valued at more than \$1 million.

Moore said he will present the lecture, illustrated with 100 slides of the collection.



1-10-73



## Leahy Wants Coin Release

Omaha should pay \$50,000 to Byron Reed heirs so it can get release of the Reed coin collection to the city, Mayor Leahy said Friday.

The mayor said he will encourage the City Council to approve the payment of the first \$25,000 next Tuesday with another \$25,000 to be paid later. A decision can be made later whether to sell the collection.

Payment to the heirs first was proposed to clear the way for possible sale of the collection, valued at more than \$1 million. But since the five heirs have signed the agreement, questions have been raised about the proposed sale.

The Library Board had sought the sale to raise money for a new downtown library.

Reed left his collection to the city on condition that it be displayed in the library, built on land which he also willed to Omaha.

12-73



# THE BYRON REED COIN COLLECTION

## MUST IT BE SOLD?

IT HAS BEEN PROPOSED THAT THE CITY OF OMAHA SELL  
AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE CITY'S HERITAGE AND A MOST IMPORTANT  
CULTURAL ASSET ... ONE OF THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE COLLECTIONS  
OF HISTORICAL EFFECTS IN EXISTENCE. THE MAIN ITEM BEING  
THE 3RD FINEST COLLECTION OF U. S. COINS IN THE WORLD.  
DONATED TO THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF OMAHA IN 1891,  
FOR THEIR EDUCATION AND ENJOYMENT.

IF YOU THINK THE CITY SHOULD KEEP THIS VALUABLE TREASURE,  
WRITE TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
OR COME TO THE JANUARY 23, 1973 MEETING  
TO MAKE YOUR WISHES KNOWN.

REMEMBER, ONLY THROUGH YOUR HELP CAN THIS COLLECTION BE SAVED.



# Council Votes to Hold Coins, But Still Seeks Library Funds

Omaha should not sell its Byron Reed coin collection, the City Council said Tuesday.

But it should build a new downtown library, using federal revenue-sharing funds or some other money, councilmen said.

Councilmen noted, however, that they could not bind future councils to follow their wishes.

The vote for the resolution to retain the collection and construct a library was approved, 5-0. Councilman Betty Abbott abstained.

She said she would not vote until she knew exactly what the collection contains and what its value is. Mrs. Abbott said she also did not think that the coin collection and library questions should be tied together as they were in the one resolution adopted by the council.

Council President H. F. Jacobberger said he will introduce next Tuesday a resolution that would designate a local numismatic group, the Byron Reed Historical Society, to take an inventory of the collection and to catalogue the coins.

Jerry Grossman, a spokesman

for the group, said the organization offered its services and would make an informal appraisal of the coins for insurance purposes.

However, Grossman and Leonard Owens, another member of the group, repeated earlier requests not to sell the collection.

## Relations Board Adds 2 Members

Two new appointees to the Human Relations Board are expected to take office Friday.

The City Council approved Tuesday the appointments of John Buehlmann, program director of a center caring for Indian alcoholics, and Burton E. "Gene" Lewis, a Northern Natural Gas Co. employee.

Buehlmann, an American Indian, and Lewis, a black, are expected to attend their first board meeting at 2 p.m. Friday at City Hall. Both were nominated last week by Mayor Leahy.

Buehlmann, 36, lives at 3308 Lincoln Boulevard. Lewis, 33, a human resources consultant with Northern, lives at 3210

North Ninety-seventh Street.

Their appointments bring the board to its authorized size of nine members. It is composed of four Negroes, three whites, one Indian and one Chicano.

## \$172,260 Allowed Roxbury Sid Park

A sanitary and improvement district in the Roxbury subdivision can spend \$172,260 to develop a park northwest of 108th and Q Streets, the City Council said Tuesday.

Much of the cost, \$133,516, will be for construction of a swimming pool, city planner S. P. Benson told the council.

Sanitary and Improvement District 124 had proposed spending \$90,000 more on the development, but its directors were told by the Planning Board and Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to pare the costs, he said.

Council approval is required for recreational developments outside the city but within the city's three-mile planning and zoning jurisdiction, according to a recent state law.



# City Will Seek Title To Reed Autographs

The city will seek clear title to medals, autographs, old paper money and other items in the Byron Reed collection before it pays \$25,000 to Reed heirs, City Atty. Herbert M. Fittle said Tuesday.

An agreement already signed by the five heirs provides that they would sign any additional agreements necessary in connection with the coin collection which Reed left to the city, Fittle said.

The payment to the heirs is necessary to provide Omaha with clear title.

Meanwhile, the City Council approved the transfer of \$25,000 from one fund to another to make the first payment.

The agreement calls for the city to make another payment of \$25,000 later.

Several councilmen have indicated that they may not vote to sell the coins. The sale was proposed to raise money for a new downtown library. But councilmen have said that federal revenue-sharing funds might be used for the library.

A group which calls itself the Byron Reed Historical Society would fight the coin sale, attorney

Jerome Grossman told the council Tuesday. Grossman also raised the question of whether other items in the Reed collection would be covered by the agreement with the heirs.

Dr. Larry Holcomb, a council candidate, questioned spending "more than \$4 million" to build a library when the exterior walls of the present building appeared to be sound.

Council President H. F. Jacobberger said the Library Board thinks the present building is too small.

The vote was 4-0. Councilmen Betty Abbott, John Rittums and Warren R. Swigart were out of the city.

1-17-73

## As Much as a New Library 1-22-73

Maybe Mr. Jacobberger's request to put the Byron Reed coin collection up for a vote of the people is all right, but we as citizens of Omaha need to preserve this outstanding collection as much as we need a new library.

Lee M. Harris.

## Don't Hasten Riverfront Development

Mrs. Earl Nichol (Pulse, Jan. 11) has a very interesting and practical idea: use the Union Station for a museum and for other purposes. That sounds better than putting up new buildings. We should proceed slowly with this Riverfront Development.

Cleo V. Hale.

## Stamp Group: Keep Going

The 120 members of the Omaha Philatelic Society have adopted a resolution expressing their opposition to the proposed sale of the Byron Reed coin collection, valued at more than \$1 million.

The resolution states that the collection "under no circumstances should be sold."

"This collection is one that is very probably unique in the United States. We feel that by selling this collection Omaha will be depriving this generation and many future generations of a cultural treasure which can never be reclaimed."

The Omaha Library Board has requested that the City Council sell the collection at a public auction to help finance a new library. The council has not acted on the request.

1-23-73

## Other Ways to Build Library

Jan 24, 1973 Lincoln.

Disposal of the Byron Reed collection would be a major cultural loss to our state. The numismatic collection of the University of Nebraska in Lincoln consists almost entirely of Byzantine, Roman and Islamic coins. We have none of the United States.

That the Reed collection has not been adequately exhibited is no real argument for its sale. We are yet unable to exhibit our collection here, but we shall eventually. The Philamatic Center at Boys Town has admirable facilities for both protection and exhibition if the City of Omaha cannot make other arrangements. It has many visitors. There are surely other ways of raising money for a library without placing too great a burden on the taxpayer.

Jain C. G. Campbell,

Curator of Numismatics, State Museum.



# Board to Proceed On Library Plans

By Mary McGrath

The Omaha Library Board Wednesday started changing the City Council's words into actions leading to construction of a downtown library.

Moreover, as planned now, the library will not include a display of the Byron Reed coin collection. The collection has been the center of debate since the board proposed it be sold to help finance a new main library.

The City Council Tuesday decided that the collection, valued at more than \$1 million, should not be sold. A library should be built with revenue-sharing or other funds, the council resolution said.

"We should take the council at face value and advise our architects to proceed with the first of the five planning stages," Library Board President Milton Abrahams said.

The architect fee for this phase is about \$68,000, and the Council should be asked for that amount, he said.

His recommendations were adopted unanimously by the seven members present. Board members absent were Mrs. Richard Hiller and the Rev. Anthony Petrusic.

Asked whether a coin display

is being designed into the proposed \$8 million structure, Abrahams said it is not.

"Our obligation is to provide library service. The responsibility for the future of the coins apparently now rests with a new organization (the Byron Reed Historical Society)," he said.

City Council President H. F. Jacobberger has said he will introduce a resolution next Tuesday designating the society to inventory and catalog the coins. The society was formed by a group of coin enthusiasts.

Abrahams also said no final decision on the new library's location has been made. Previous discussion has centered on the present site.

Preliminary planning still can be done by the firms of Helimuth, Obata & Kassabaum of St. Louis, Mo., and John Latenser & Sons, he said.

Clarence Teal, building committee chairman, told the board that widening and redesigning the corner of Ninetieth Street and West Dodge Road will necessitate a new parking lot entrance for Swanson Library. The state will pay the estimated \$15,000 cost of the project.

The board voted a 5 per cent pay raise for Library Director Frank Gibson, from \$1,727 a month to \$1,812.

1-25-73

## Smith, Veys Are Running As a Team

By David Thompson

City Councilmen Al Veys and L. K. Smith will run as a team for re-election, they announce Thursday.

"While we are both independent candidates, and certainly in the past have made independent decisions and will continue to do so in the future, we intend to run in tandem and will share expenses of this campaign," Smith said.

"Neither does our tandem campaign indicate that we think exactly alike on all issues, but on general concepts our views are quite similar."

Veys, a 54-year-old South Omaha grocer, will seek his fifth term on the council. Smith, 60, former Omaha police chief and public safety director, will seek his second.

The two announced their intentions during a meeting of the South Omaha Kiwanis Club at Johnny's Cafe.

### 'Keep Reed Coins'

They expressed general agreement on issues facing the council within the next several months. Both said they oppose the sale of the Byron Reed coin collection and favor other financing for a new downtown library.

Both said they oppose election of councilmen by district.

"The council's decision Tuesday not to locate a refuse recycling center at Twentieth and Center Streets is a prime example of the merits of election of councilmen at large," Veys said.

1-25-73



Benson Sun 1-25-73

## MICK ROOD

### Reed documents show neglect

**T**HE "OTHER HALF" of the Byron Reed Coin Collection is up on the third floor of the downtown library.

You turn to your left at the top of the stairs. Iron bars criss-cross the unmarked doorway. But the bars are not locked. The door may be closed and the light inside the dingy room might have to be turned on.

First thing you see is several rows of regularly catalogued library books. There is no attendant



in the room. But kind of stumble along until you see the literary portion of the Reed collection—willed to the city 82 years ago. A city librarian who was interested in the collection—Edith Tobitt—said in 1929 there are 832 autographs, 1,836 books, 3,243 pamphlets, 615 Confederate notes and 2,136 bank notes. Perhaps there are.

But like the more famous coins (\$689 of them), which are locked away in a bank vault, the documents are not catalogued. Nothing or no one tells you where these things are.

A brief exploration of the documents shows the autograph section is as fascinating as the whole collection is neglected by its current overseers—the City Library Board and staff.

The autographs are in glass sliding panels inside of a large wooden case at one end of the third floor library room. Assuming authenticity, the content of some of the letters in the display acquired by Byron Reed and/or his father are as interesting as the autographs on them.

Autographs are primarily from, but not limited to, 19th Century famous Americans. There is a note from abolitionist John Brown to his second wife and their 20 children that he was "confident of ultimate success . . . but (we) have to be patient. . . ." The 1859 note came several months before he was hanged for the Harper's Ferry insurrection.

In another panel, John Tyler writes to reject friends' requests in 1821 that he run for the Virginia Legislature. True to his word, Tyler did not run. However, Tyler eventually was elected Vice-President and became President of the United States (1841-44) when William Henry Harrison died in office.

The signatures of many 15th to 19th Century European heads of state are there. Beethoven's scrawling hand is there. Most signers of the Declaration of Independence are represented. Other U.S. Presidents can be found.

President Grover Cleveland, for whom Reed's firm handled some Omaha property in Cleveland's wife's name, sent an 1894 note from the White House to pay real estates taxes of \$451.40.

Matching sentiment of taxpayers before and since, Cleveland wrote:

"I think if a man owned property enough in Omaha, it would bankrupt him with neatness and dispatch."

Aside from the autographs there are at least two exceptions to the apparently mundane remainder of the Reed collection documents.

Last Thursday, I found those two lying put on a table in the empty "display" room. There was a 1799 ledger book of George Washington's Mount Vernon distillery and fishery. In the hand of Washington's secretary, Tobias Lear, the ledger has Washington's voucher signatures throughout. It was purchased for Reed at a Philadelphia auction in 1890 for \$200.

Next to the ledger was an ornate 15th Century book of Gregorian Chants. It comes from a Cathedral in Milan, Italy. The book was purportedly stolen during the 30 Years War and eventually brought to America, where Reed purchased it from a dealer.

The deteriorating Washington ledger book was loosely wrapped in a piece of brown paper. The medieval chant book's thick pages were grimy and withering on the corners toward the front.

During my second visit last Friday, a young librarian told me I had better put the two books away. Told that they were out the previous day, he said: "Someone did a poor job of supervising."

Asked if I could look at the encased, autographs he said: "Well you really shouldn't, but it'll be all right."

A little while later I left the dusty-velvet book shelves, piled-up boxes of pamphlets and stacked-up display frames.

I wondered whether this is what a dying Byron Reed meant in 1891 when he willed the collection to the city for "display for the benefit of the public under such reasonable rules and regulations as may be provided by the City of Omaha."

**LIBRARY DIRECTOR** Frank Gibson says gratuitously of the Jan. 25 column that suggested Byron Reed collection documents were neglected at the library:

"Quite frankly, we have tightened security as a result of your article. You can say that . . ."

Jan 2-7 1973



# League Pushing for Library

Quick action on planning for a new public library in downtown Omaha was urged by the City Council Tuesday after hearing a plea from the president of the League of Women Voters.

Mrs. Emma Jean Wupper of 1314 South Ninety-fifth Street appeared before the council to say the league backs the use of federal revenue-sharing funds for a new library.

"Last week, the Omaha City Council passed a resolution not to sell the Byron Reed coin collection," she said. "This year this council might allocate a sum equal to the value of the Byron Reed collection to start the library building fund."

The collection kept for several years in a bank vault and estimated to be worth more than \$1 million, was considered by the council for sale at auction as a way to raise money for a new library. The council changed its mind because of numerous protests against the sale.

Library Director Frank Gibson told the council the Library Board has selected an architectural firm in St. Louis, Mo.—Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum—to make a preliminary study for a new building.

## 'Guesstimate'

Gibson said the study will cost an estimated \$68,000. The over-all cost of a new library has been estimated at \$6 million.

"Six million is a ballpark figure, as any new construction must be," he said.

Council President H.F. Jacobberger asked Gibson to present quickly a request for planning funds and added:

"I'm not about to commit myself to an expenditure for a building until I know what it's going to contain and how large it will be.

"Revenue-sharing sounds like a magical thing," Jacobberger said. "It's going to be \$20

million over the next five years, and the new library building would take one-third of it."

Councilman John Ritums argued that the building did not have to be paid for immediately and that someone might step forward with a gift.

"We'll gladly accept your check, John," Jacobberger responded. "Are you ready to write it?"

Councilman Arthur D. Bradley Jr. closed the discussion, telling Gibson, "Let's get going on this next week."

In other action, the council voted 6-1 on a resolution calling for the mayor, with council approval, to designate a local group of coin collectors to inventory the Byron Reed collection with out cost to the city. Bradley, a proponent of selling the collection, voted against the resolution.

## Ritums: Save Landmarks

City Councilman John Ritums said Friday he plans to introduce an ordinance within a few weeks that would designate Omaha's historical landmark buildings and prohibit their demolition.

There are certain buildings "which it would be a crime to tear down," Ritums said. Some historically valuable buildings have already been demolished, he added.

The councilman said the downtown library is one of the buildings which should not be demolished. "It gives the city a certain architectural flavor," he said during a talk to the Lutheran Men of Omaha at the North-ern Natural Gas Co. building.

In an interview following the talk he declined to say which other buildings he might include in the historical designation because it could lead to property speculation.

Ritums said he favors construction of a new library somewhere downtown. 1-27-73

## New Library Needed?

1-26-73 Omaha.

Does Omaha need a new library? There are several branches which are nearly new. It would be better to build branches, anyway. How many people use the one downtown? Would it pay to spend that large amount? Why not use the U.P. station where there is plenty of parking?

Why can't the Byron Reed coin collection be placed in the Joslyn Museum? There people could see it and security is better.

A. L. M.



# Public sentiment on coins flips; Reed collection likely to stay

"The showing of the collection to advantage to all people is not as easy as it may seem."

—Omaha Librarian Edith Tobitt, 1929

By Mick Rood

**W**HO WOULD have guessed that one of Omaha's largest political groundswells of recent years could be in behalf of a coin collection?

First rumored and then widely publicized, the efforts of some city officials to sell the Byron Reed Coin Collection for a new downtown library construction nest egg apparently has collapsed under heavy public sentiment.

Call the movement "numismaticism."

A few months ago, City Councilman Arthur D. Bradley Jr. admits he might have thought that was some kind of disease. Once the chief advocate of selling the collection Bradley now has a higher appreciation for the art of collecting coins.

"I guess I've softened up on selling it . . . There's been an awful lot of interest . . . not to sell it. I've had a lot of phone calls. Gee, I think it's great that the people are expressing them-

selves on an issue," Bradley sums up a bit sheepishly.

**THE REED** collection has been referred to by local and national numismatists as one of the three finest collections of American coins in the country—valued at more than \$1 million.

The City Council will be voting soon on a \$50,000 appropriation to gain clear title to the collection from the Reed heirs. Tuesday, the council is expected to vote for an inventory-appraisal of the collection—more with the intent of valuing it for proper public promotion and display than for selling it. Council members are now discussing other library construction fund possibilities, according to Bradley.

What brought on this groundswell? Certainly not the collection itself. As City Librarian Edith Tobitt wrote in 1929, "Coins in the cases are dead if we have no one to instruct the visitor of their interest and value." Although under her enthusiastic wing, she reported that hundreds of persons viewed the collection every month in the Omaha Public Library downtown at 19th and Harney streets, interest dwindled over the years. By 1953, a *Sun* story tagged it "Omaha's Lost Exhibit." City Librarian Frank Gibson said the

(Continued on Page 4-B.)



Reed . . . City followed his will.



(Continued from Page 1-B)

collection was lucky to have 25 visitors a year.

Then in 1965 after several burglary attempts, the collection was secured from the public in a U.S. National Bank vault for lack of adequate security at the aging library.

POLITICAL observers credit the Omaha Coin Club, until now an obscure group of 50-odd numismatists, with turning the popular sentiment around.

Representative of the group's suddenly prominent wishes are Dick Fielding, club president, and Melvin Stark, former club president and curator of Boys Town's PhilaMatic Center.

Once it was known last April that three coin dealers had made an offer to the Reed heirs and the City Library Board to buy the collection, Fielding went to work seeking a home for the collection. He made futile requests of the American Numismatic Association and organizers of the proposed Union Pacific "old West" museum. In the past, efforts to place the collection in Joslyn Museum had failed.

Finally, when the council announced an apparent intention to sell the collection in December, Fielding, Stark and Co. turned politicians to prevent the sale. The pair have made countless media appearances, they are leafleting—"The Byron Reed Coin Collection—MUST IT BE SOLD?" They have even formed a front organization—The Byron Reed Historical Society—made up primarily of Omaha Coin Club members with a few non-numismatists mixed in. They have held public meetings and lobbied. Now they are counting votes.

STARK figures the coin buffs have enough council votes to get an inventory conducted—not necessarily for sale purposes.

If they succeed in preventing a sale this year, Stark figures it will have been an uphill battle for the coin club.

"The whole problem is that there doesn't seem to be anyone in the library, City Council or in city government who is interested in the collection or antiquity," Stark told the Sun.

"We want to make it clear we are not opposed to a new library, but it is not an 'either-or' situation. The collection would not buy much of a \$5 million library. If we sell the collection, we sell part of our heritage," Fielding said.

Although one of the finest collections in the country (primarily for its American coin section), the Reed coins have not been inventoried in recent years. An original inventory of the collection is missing, Stark says. Librarian Tobitt gave this description in 1929:

"The entire collection numbers 6,869 coins, 12,280 medals, 832 autographs, 1,836 books, 3,243 pamphlets, 615 Confederate notes and 2,136 bank notes."

STARK and Fieldings value the collection at well in excess of \$1 million. A partial Omaha Coin Club appraisal of the collection in 1965 put the American coins at only \$650,000, they said, adding that such coins can appreciate 10 per cent in value every year.

For example, the 1904 U.S. silver dollar

Numismatists press  
for permanent display





**CURATOR AMONG COINS** . . . Stark says Boys Town's offer to display the Reed collection still stands. In lieu of a more central display area, the far superior Reed coins would complement what Boys Town has at its PhilaMatic Center.

(never circulated) at the heart of the collection may not be worth \$100,000. There are only 14 or 15 in existence. Stark said one sold last year for \$80,000. The collection has numerous other highlights:

—A healthy foreign coin collection, including about 20 gold coins and medallions from Imperial Rome.

—The autographs of many American presi-

dents and a "log book" kept by George Washington.

—Of local interest, a \$10 Florence Bank note issued in the 1850s before bank-issued notes were superseded by federal currency. The Florence Bank was the first chartered bank in Nebraska.

A prominent citizen whose real estate firm still bears his name, Bryan Reed came to Omaha

in 1855. He inherited much of the collection from his father. After building a prosperous business here, he eventually authorized dealers to bid regularly for him at New York coin auctions. American coins in the collection range from 1794 through 1890.

• • •  
**WHEN REED** scratched a shaggy signature to his will on June 2, 1891, he conveyed the present downtown library site to the city—provided that the city construct a four-story "public library or art gallery" within two years to house the coin collection. Reed wanted a fireproof building with the collection "used and displayed for the benefit of the public under such reasonable rules and regulations as may be provided therefore by the City of Omaha." He wanted no collection items taken from the building. The coin exhibits should be open to the public free of charge . . . for at least a portion of the time (if not all the time) . . .

Reed died two days after he signed the will. The city took advantage of the bequest nearly on schedule—opening the downtown library in 1894.

On the eve of an apparent political victory, Stark and Fielding still don't have a satisfactory option for the sale—a suitable display area. Stark says Boys Town administrator, Msgr. Nicholas H. Wenger, has heartily approved an offer to locate the collection in the PhilaMatic Center. But Stark admits this might not be a permanent solution.

The numismatist-politicians are shooting for a centrally located, prominent display of the collection:

"Every city has an image—a symbol. What does Omaha have besides few rows down there . . . the stockyards. The Reed collection could be a symbol for the city if properly displayed," Stark says.

# 'Part of heritage'



## Omaha Mayor Cools To Sale Of Reed Collection

Some numismatic "homework" has caused Omaha's Mayor Leahy to have some second thoughts about breaking up the world-famous Byron Reed collection and selling it at auction to raise funds for a new downtown library building.

Regarded as the third most complete collection of U.S. coins in existence, the collection was presented to the city in 1894 by the late pioneer Omaha real estate man, with the stipulation that it be kept forever on public display in the public library.

In 1966, after two attempts had been made to steal the collection from the library, it was decided that this provision was too difficult to live with, and the million dollar collection disappeared from public view and into a bank vault.

After receiving an offer from a group of three Midwest coin dealers, city council members fell into accord, that selling the collection could readily raise funds for the projected new library building. Steps got under way to secure releases from the five Reed heirs, so that the coins might be sold to raise funds.

In some recent reading, however, Mayor Leahy learned that during 1972 alone, the value of numismatic collections increased by 275 per cent, and that such collections are good hedges against inflation.

He reasoned that with an increase that large, the city might be better off borrowing money to build the library, and retain the Reed collection.

The city's library board had suggested selling the collection originally, and the suggestion found support at first among most of the councilmen; though area numismatists registered strong objections to the sale.

Steps were taken at an earlier council session to secure clear title to the collection from the surviving Reed heirs; a resolution was passed to pay those heirs a sum of \$25,000 now, and \$25,000 within 12 months, in which time the sale could have been expected to take place.

According to a council member, the council had been advised earlier by an assistant city attorney that Omaha was violating the terms of the Byron Reed will by not having the collection available for public display in the downtown library.

The payment of the heirs, this member said, probably would prevent the prospect of a court fight over the city's right to the collection at all.

Malvin Stark, curator of nearby Boys Town Museum, expressed

the opinion at a council meeting, however, that council should not make such an agreement with the heirs. He is on record for having sought the display for Boys Town.

Since this meeting, several councilmen have said they would favor setting aside a portion of Omaha's federal revenue sharing funds to build the new library.

Councilman Arthur D. Bradley Jr. has altered a proposed resolution to be presented at the council's January 23 meeting, which originally called for an inventory, appraisal and quick sale of the collection.

The alteration eliminates the requirement for the "quick sale."

## Feb. 4, 1973 Federal Cash Might Buy Library Plan

The City Council Tuesday will consider appropriating \$68,000 in federal revenue-sharing funds for schematic plans for a new downtown library.

The money was requested by the Library Board. It would be taken from the \$3.99 million in revenue sharing funds granted to the city in 1972.

The board has selected Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum, a St. Louis-based architectural firm, to work with John Latenser & Sons of Omaha in designing the building. It would replace the present structure, built in 1894.

Council President H.F. Jacobberger asked last week that the board submit information on the size of the building and what it would contain before the city would commit funds.

The council will conduct a hearing on a request to rezone property northwest of 120th and Anne Streets in the Millard area for a shopping center and a service station.

The proposal has drawn protests from some area residents who said they were not told about plans for the service station when the shopping center was explained to them.

The council also will conduct a hearing on an ordinance that would place the question of selecting 12 councilmen by district on the May 15 general election ballot. Voters would decide on a proposal that is nearly the same as that contained in LB 12, a measure being considered by the Legislature.

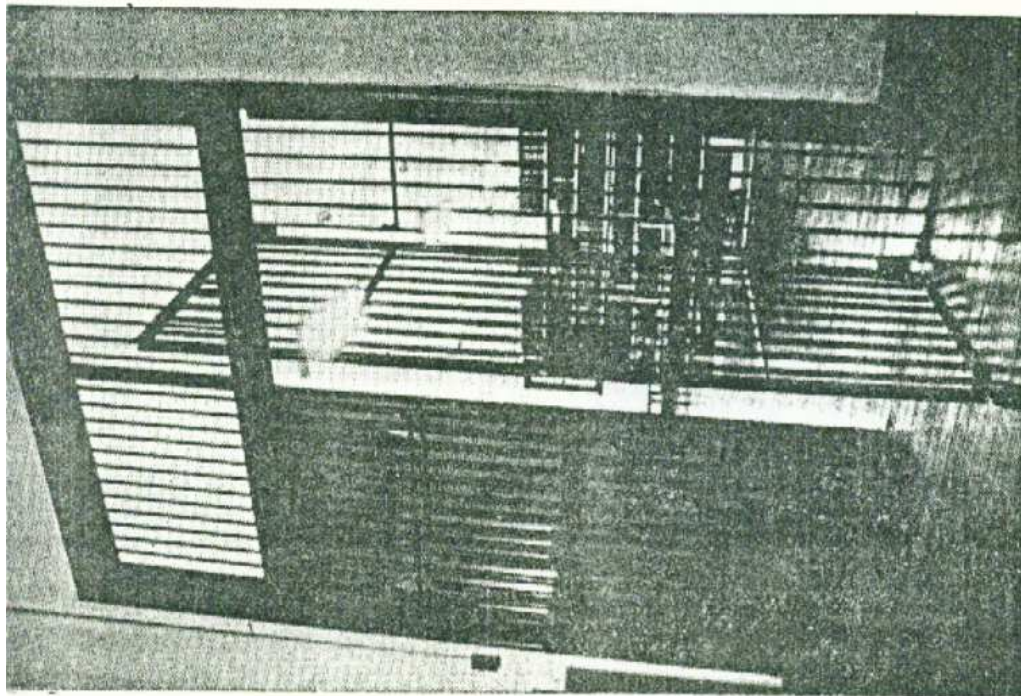
## Wants City to Finance Library 2/5/73 Omaha.

City government has always agreed there should be a new Main Library but has never managed to find the funds. The Library Board itself managed to generate a source by arranging a way to sell the Library's Byron Reed coin collection. The City Council, however, decided to keep the collection.

It would therefore seem only just that the council immediately donate the estimated value of the collection to the Main Library trust fund. The city has on hand federal revenue sharing funds with which they should do so. Mary Alice Race.



# Reed collection poses problem to library; professional sought to organize 'historical center'



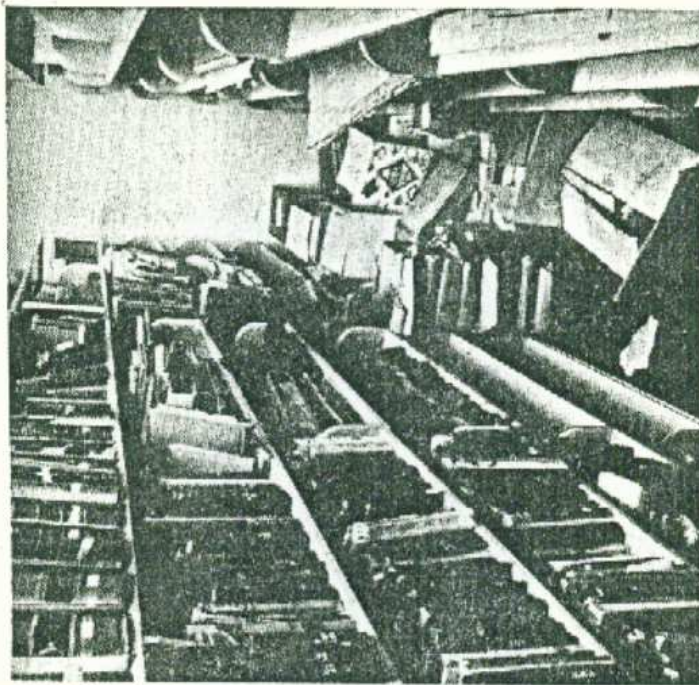
**BARS AT DOOR . . .** Sometimes the collection room is locked; sometimes it is not.

**“O**BVIOUSLY, we are having some problems in maintaining this collection,” City Library Director Frank Gibson said of the literary portion of the Byron Reed coin collection.

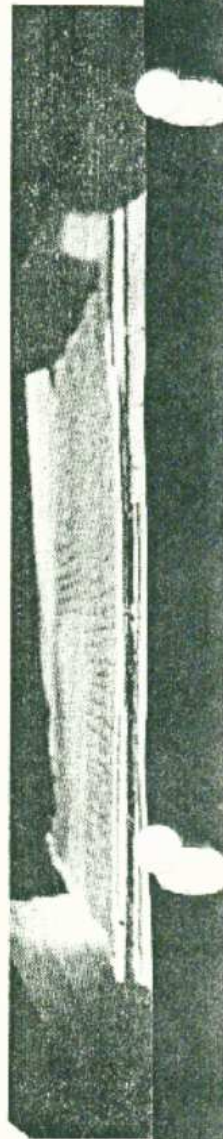
Some 832 autographs, 1,836 books and 3,243 pamphlets willed to the city by Reed in 1891 are tucked away in an unmarked third floor room at the downtown library at 18th and Harney streets.

Gibson said there has never been much public interest in Reed documents and that the li-

**Sun photos by  
Ray Smith**



**FILED ON FLOOR . . .** Boxes of aging magazines, photographs and scrapbooks make browsing difficult.





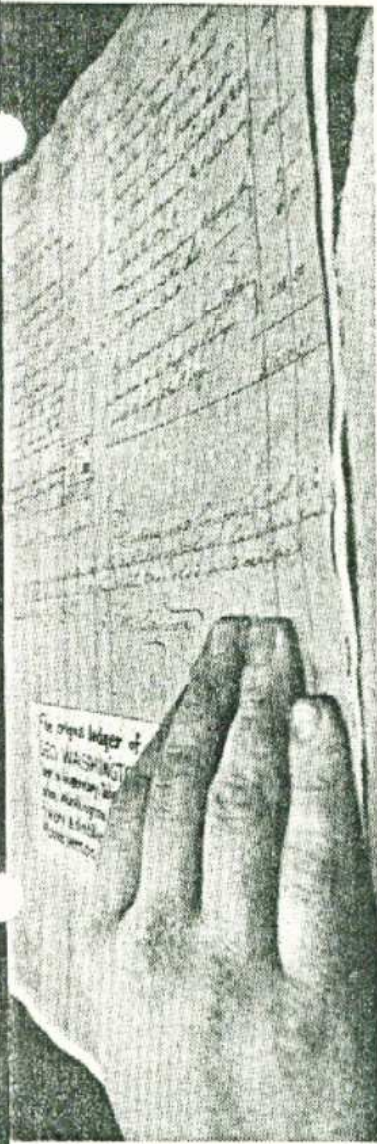
brary has not had enough staff to oversee and organize the collection. He conceded that only the autographs—housed in a handsome wooden case with sliding panels—are as “well displayed as possible.”

The library director did tell the Sun of three developments which should aid the public's enjoyment of the collection:

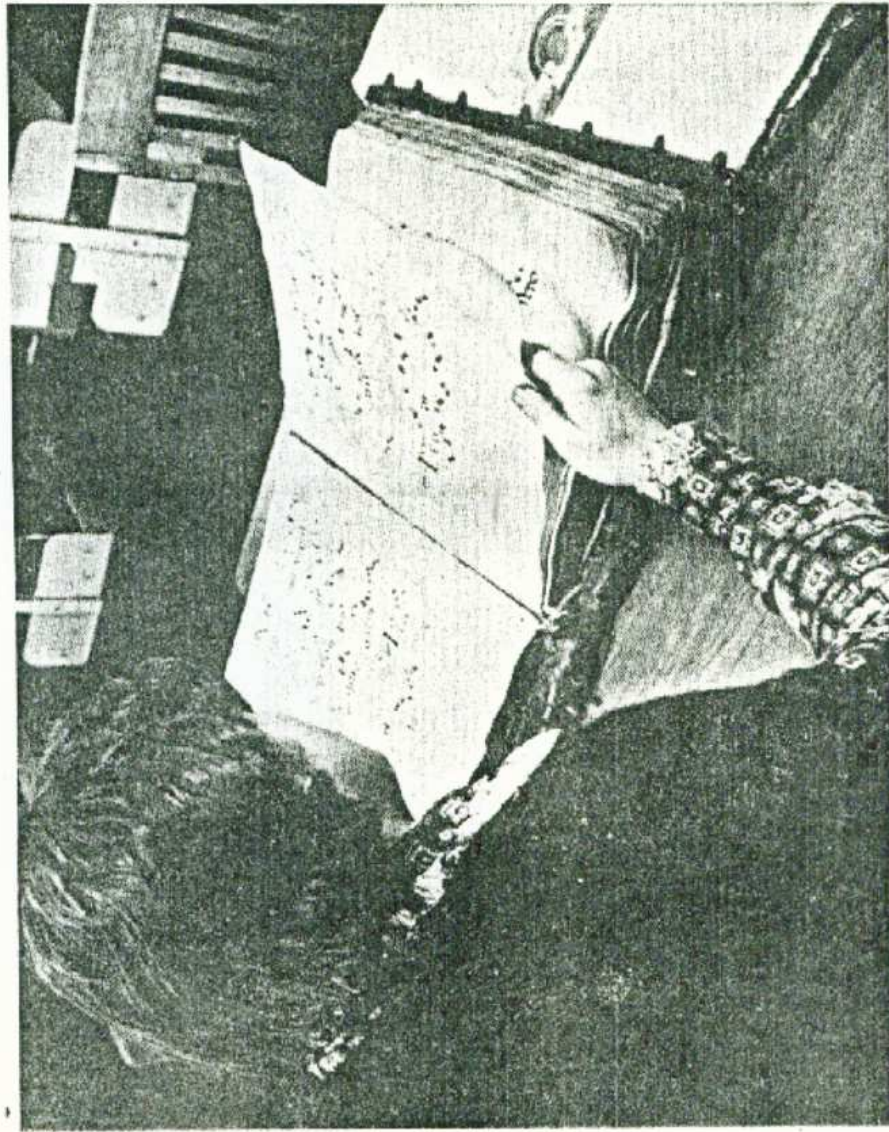
—Starting this week, the collection room will be open to the public only from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Mondays through Friday. Gibson said the “tightening of security” will help insure safety of the collection during hours when staff library members can keep an eye on it.

—The library has been attempting to turn the third floor room into a “local history center,” according to Gibson. The valuable Reed pamph-


(Continued on Page 2-A)



GEORGE'S UNATTENDED BOOK... Washington's ledger was bought in 1890 for \$200.



HUMANITARIAN... 12th... Condition... an hand-printed... are curled with age



# SUN

## SECTION A

Home • Family Editorials  
Clubs • Entertainment • Art

Section A, February 1, 1973



# Library planning historical center

(Continued from Page 1-A)  
 old Nebraska newspapers, magazines and books will be supplemented by "other rare books" being transferred to the room. The library's own genealogical collection and recently received historical records of the North Omaha Woman's Club.

Gibson said he will repeat request for a librarian when an city budget is prepared in May. The librarian would be hired specifically to oversee and organize the Reed collection and other documents in the history center. There is no one currently assigned to the work, he said. A similar request for the librarian at a \$2,000 salary was cut out of the library's budget last year, Gibson said.

Gibson said the \$8,000 salary would allow the hiring of a

professional who could provide proper care for the collection—not just custodial care.

He said conditions are not as bad as have been portrayed in the media. However, when the Sun visited the third floor collection room, documents were found piled up in boxes between library stacks, various parts of the Reed collection were unmarked, a ledger of George Washington's Mount Vernon distillery in 1799 was lying askew on a lower shelf and a 15th Century book of Gregorian chants was found atop a box on the floor.

Gibson said all newspapers in the Reed collection and some rare documents—including the Washington ledger—are available on microfilm. Contents of the collection are listed in the library's main cata-

log on the first floor. A general "subject indicator" of collection contents is also available, he said.

## Leahy Talks New Library Near River

By David Thompson

Mayor Leahy said Monday that he is weighing a suggestion that a new downtown library be built as part of the riverfront development program and close to a possible downtown campus of the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

"It's strictly in the exploratory stages, and there is nothing solid yet," he said.

Leahy said he does not oppose moving the library away from its present site at Nineteenth and Harney Streets on land that was given to the city by the late Byron Reed.

Locating a new library close to a downtown campus would make it easier for the library to serve more people, Leahy said.

No decision has been reached on another campus, although that, too, has been suggested as part of the riverfront development program. The campus decision would be made by the Board of Regents, the mayor said.

The area being considered for the library is near a three-block-wide plaza south of Dodge Street that would extend from Fourteenth Street east to the river.

The City Council last week provided \$60,000 in federal revenue-sharing funds for preliminary plans for a new downtown library.

Leahy said he thought that any plans could be modified without too much difficulty to fit a site other than the present library location.



# Omaha's Unseen Coin Collection

## Has Attraction for Tourists, and Burglars; It Won't Be Sold to Pay for New Library

By Sam Thorson

continued to crumble on its foundation.

The board's solution could not have been more natural: sell the coins, which no one sees anyway, thereby raising funds toward a new \$6 million downtown library.

That proposal, offered last summer, was met with a storm of objections from Stark and other coin fanciers organized as the Byron Reed Historical Society. Their contention — selling the coins to build a library would put Byron Reed's cart before his horse — won the day: the City Council, after first approving the idea, sensed a public groundswell and reversed itself on Jan. 23.

Ironically, by losing the battle, the library board appeared to have won the war.

In forbidding the sale of the collection, the City Council resolved that a new library should be funded with revenue-sharing money or some other alternative. The next day the

library board decided to advise architects to proceed with \$68,000 worth of initial planning for a new downtown library, a move which had been pending for more than a year.

Two weeks later, the Council formally coughed up \$68,000 in revenue-sharing funds.

Both Gibson and City Council President H. F. Jacobberger say the coin controversy had nothing to do with the long-sought initial appropriation for the new library. But Stark takes a different view.

He suggests that the defeat of the board's proposal might have worked to its advantage — bringing the library problem to a head by drawing attention to the coin collection's neglected state, and the lack of a safe and suitable place to display it.

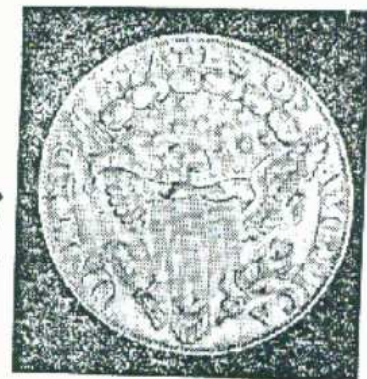
"It might have taken two years till these coins hit the market," the Boys Town curator said, observing that an auction would have required an exhaustive inventory and appraisal, and the preparation and distribution of a sale catalog.

"I think Gibson's going to get the library sooner the way he's going," Stark remarked. "I think we did him a favor."

No one can predict whether the new library will include display facilities and security devices for exhibiting the collection with the prominence it deserves, because the library is only in the space-planning stage. Gibson says only that "if the City Council directs it, I'm sure the coins will be on display in the new building."

But, the librarian adds, "I think it would require an alarm system and armed guards. It gets to the point where it's really dangerous. I'm really surprised they didn't take us when we had them here."

Other possibilities are under discussion. One, advanced by Omaha rare coin dealer Aubrey Bebee and City Councilman Warren H. Swigart, would be to convert the Union Pacific Station into a historical



Omaha Libraries director Frank Gibson (right) and assistant director Edward C. Newman with the 1804 dollar which is shown at the top of this page.

museum, with the Reed coins and artifacts as its main attraction. Union Pacific has offered to sell the building to the city for \$1.

Stark has offered the Boys Town Phil-a-Matic Center as a place for public display of the coins, at least until a permanent home is found. He said the institution would make arrangements to protect the collection.

While the coins remain temporarily homeless, a battery of local coin authorities to be selected by the mayor will soon begin "attributing" (identifying and cataloging) the coins, at the behest of the City Council.

If Stark is selected, it will be his second such endeavor. He helped inventory the American coins just before the collection was placed in

the bank vault. The U.S. assortment, comprising about a fourth of the 6,869 coins in the collection, accounts for most of its value.

That project alone took "five or six of us three hours a night, five or six nights a week for maybe six or eight months," said Stark, trying to give an idea of the scope of the job ahead.

The American collection includes nearly every coin minted between 1794 and 1890, making it as nearly complete a U.S. collection as any in the country except the Eliasberg collection in Baltimore (which is complete) and the Smithsonian collection, Stark said.

However, he observed, "Reed wasn't striving for a complete collec-

Continued on Page 12



Melvin Stark, Boys Town coin-stamp expert.





#### Omaha

The million-dollar Byron Reed coin collection, its future apparently safe from the auction block, could eventually become Omaha's counterpart to the San Francisco's cable cars, New Orleans' Mardi Gras, St. Louis' Gateway Arch or the New York City's Statue of Liberty.

"Sure, it's not going to become as famous as the cable cars or the Statue of Liberty," acknowledges Melvin Stark, curator of the Boys Town PhilaMatic (philatelic-numismatic, or stamp-coin) Center.

But it's unique for a city to own a valuable coin collection. I think it could be a good tourist attraction if it were handled properly."

Stark, who is also a member of the Omaha Coin Club, led the recent fight to keep the million-dollar coin collection intact and in Omaha.

Stark and other local coin experts agreed that the collection, featuring the country's third finest array of U.S. coins, was historically and numismatically too valuable to sell — as had been proposed last summer by the Omaha Library Board.

Consider the plight of the Library Board, which has for years borne two millstones around its neck — both placed there by a 19th century real estate man and antiquity buff named Byron Reed.

Reed carelessly but unintentionally the present-day board's problems by peremptorily dying in 1891, leaving his extensive collection of coins (as well as banknotes, autographs, books and rare manuscripts) to the city, along with a parcel of land at 19th and Harney.

There was a catch, you see. The city had to build a library or art gallery on the land to display the coins and artifacts to the public. That it did, and the coins and artifacts were placed in a steel-encased room on third floor.

The library was a beauty in its time. But now it is 80 years old, overcrowded, and generally regarded as a disgrace. For years, the board's efforts to gain city funding to replace it have met with no success.

The other millstone is the collection itself, which persists becoming more valuable every year. A fabulous numismatic treasure, it valued at from one to three million dollars — although Stark says you couldn't put it back together even if you had \$50 million."

That makes it not only a potent tourist attraction, but a burglar attraction as well. Two robbery attempts in 1963 and 1965 convinced library director Frank Gibson to the library board that it was simply too attractive to display any longer — at least not without security measures beyond the board's budget.

So since 1966, the coins have been kept unseen and unappreciated in a bank vault, gathering dust at market value, while the library



# Omaha Library's Coin Collection

Continued from Page 7.

tion. I don't think he paid much attention to the mint marks." Only one mint mark is present for each year and denomination, Stark said.

The best known item in the collection is an 1804 silver dollar, widely considered the finest of 14 remaining specimens. The 1804 dollar, actually minted in 1834 to complete a coin series prepared as a gift for the King of Siam, is worth as much as \$100,000.

Other American coins of comparable rarity, although not so famous or valuable as the prestigious 1804 dollar, include two \$5 gold pieces of 1829, one with large type (one of five of its kind) and the other with small type (one of six); an 1841 quarter-eagle; a proof-condition 1873 \$3 gold piece; and several \$50 gold slugs.

Other rare American coins include Mormon and Dubosq coins, territorial gold pieces and San Francisco U.S. Assay Office gold. Also among the U.S. coins are some 400 "patterns" and experimental coins.

The rest of the coin collection is somewhat mysterious, although descriptions of it have appeared in print. "They really don't know what's there because it hasn't had any care," Stark said. "The original

inventory was lost many, many years ago."

Modern European countries are well represented, according to a recent library handout, but the South America collection is very small. Coins of ancient Greece and Rome include the shekel series and the 25 types of the "widow's mite." One rare Roman coin reportedly bears the profile of Cleopatra.

The remainder of the Byron Reed collection, still accessible to the public on the third floor of the downtown library, includes these highlights.

—An autographed poem by Robert Burns;

—autographs of Henry IV, Charles VII and Louis XII of France; Napoleon; George Washington and Abraham Lincoln; and many signers of the Declaration of Independence.

—Music scores and letters written by Beethoven, Haydn, Rossini, Paganini and other famous composers;

—Over 1,800 books, including what is reportedly a first-edition 1653 copy of Izaak Walton's *The Compleat Angler*, and a 1561 copy of John Calvin's *The Institution of Christian Religion*;

—and 2,751 banknotes, including 615 Confederate notes.

Byron Reed, who came to Omaha from Ohio in 1855, inherited much of the collection from his father. After building a prosperous real estate company that still bears his name, he authorized dealers to bid for him at New York coin auctions.

Reed, wrote an Omaha City Librarian in the 1920's, "gave to Omaha the present library site; deeded to citizens of Omaha his valuable collection for all time, no parts thereof ever to be removed, and provided that the public shall have access part or all of the time, free of any admittance charge, according to his will made June 4, 1891; Abraham L. Reed, trustee."

## Art Directors: Sale Possibly Unwise

By James Bresette

Operating deficits are common among art museums, but selling art to relieve such deficits is not so common and can be unwise, a majority of museum directors contacted by The World-Herald said Friday.

The five directors, all but one at museums with budgets in the same general range as Joslyn's, were asked to comment on a recommendation by the Joslyn board of trustees' executive committee that art from the permanent collection be sold to raise \$1 million. The money would be invested to "buy time" to organize a fund drive to increase the museum's endowment so it could operate without deficit, officials say.

The recommendation will be discussed by the full board at a meeting Tuesday.

William Agee, director of the Pasadena, Calif., Museum of Modern Art, said several paintings and sculptures from the museum's collection were sold about four years ago, before he became director, to get rid of a deficit.

### \$650,000 Budget

"I forget what the figures were, but it was not insubstantial," Agee said.

He said the museum has a budget of about \$650,000 a year and last year had a deficit of close to \$150,000.

Joslyn's budget this year is about \$500,000 and a deficit of \$74,200 is anticipated, officials say.

Some officials recently suggested the Pasadena museum again sell some art to relieve the deficit, Agee said.

"But we put the lid on that.

It's just unacceptable. It's just the worst possible thing you can do.

### 'A Tricky Thing'

"I'm not against the selling of works of art, but only if the funds go to the purchase of other works of art. It's a tricky thing, but if used intelligently it can be used to upgrade the collection," he said.

"The problem is that trustees all too often see selling art as the easy way out instead of getting off their duffs and going out and raising some money, which is their responsibility.

"No one thinks of the long-term implications of it — the violation of trust, the destruction of confidence among collectors who might potentially give to the museum.

"They keep that (selling) up

long enough and they'll be very concerned, because no one's going to give them anything, no even pictures to sell. It's very shortsighted," Agee said.

### Unpopular, Beneficial

But A. Morton Raych, acting director of the Hyde Collection in Glens Falls, N.Y., said his museum's sale of works in 1965 while highly unpopular, proved financially beneficial.

The museum consists of the former home and private collection of a prominent Glens Falls family and includes works by such Renaissance masters as Rubens, Rembrandt, Titian, Botticelli and Da Vinci, Raych said.

"Our budget is \$97,000 this year, but we were not anywhere near that in 1968, when we sold a Picasso and a Bracque. A

Please turn to Page 3, Col. 1.



## City Council Told

# Heirs 'Don't Require Sale of Coins'

Feb 28, 1973

Although the city has agreed to pay \$50,000 to the Byron Reed heirs to clear the way for sale of the Reed coin collection, it does not have to sell the collection, according to City Atty. Herbert M. Fittle.

The City Council asked Fittle late last year whether the agreement with the heirs would require the sale. The attorney Tuesday presented another agreement signed by the five heirs which stated that the city would not be required to sell the collection.

At the time the agreement was negotiated last year, the city had considered selling the collection to raise money for a new downtown library.

However, a majority of the council has indicated since then that they favor retaining the collection.

The city agreed to pay \$25,000

to the heirs at the time of the agreement and \$25,000 one year later or when the coins were sold, whichever is sooner.

The agreements with the heirs do not cover the land on which the present downtown library is located, property that Reed also left to the city, Fittle said.

That land at Nineteenth and Harney Streets still belongs to the city under the condition that it be used for the library, he said.

## Omaha Will Keep Reed Collection

The city fathers of Omaha Neb., have decided not to sell the famed Byron Reed coin collection—at least not right now.

The City Council voted Jan. 2 to keep the collection and see other means of financing construction of a new downtown library. The vote was 6 to 0, with one Council member abstaining.

Until recently, a number of city officials had favored sale of the collection, estimating they could thereby raise more than \$5 million of the \$6 million needed to build the new library. The city Library Board was on record favoring such a sale, too.

They reportedly had second thoughts, however, after reading in a business magazine that numismatic collections had increased in value by 225 per cent during 1972.

After they heard that, they

(OMAHA, Page 5)

## NUMISMATIC NEWS 2-6-73

### OMAHA

(From Page 1)

decided the collection should be kept—if for no other reason, as an investment for Omaha," coin dealer Aubrey E. Bebee reported.

Whatever the Council's motivation, Bebee and other local hobbyists were pleased and relieved at the latest turn of events.

"We're really delighted," the well-known dealer exclaimed.

The Council now plans to finance the library, in part at least, with federal revenue-sharing funds. Veterans may be asked to approve a bond issue, too, Bebee said.

As for the Reed collection, it remains to be seen whether the Council action has expedited the sale or merely delayed it.

Council President H. F. Jacobberger said he would in-

troduce a resolution at the Jan. 30 meeting designating a local numismatic group, the Byron Reed Historical Society, to take an inventory of the collection and catalog its contents.

Beyond that Bebee, for one, is optimistic now that the collection may end up in a local museum. He and Councilman Warren R. Swigert have suggested that it could serve as the nucleus for a new museum in the old Union Pacific Station. From time to time there have been suggestions, too, that the American Numismatic Association might move its headquarters to Omaha and take custody of the coins.

The 8,000-coin collection includes many outstanding U.S. rarities, among them an 1894 silver dollar. Reed, a pioneer Omaha real estate man, gave it to the city in 1931 on condition that it be kept on permanent display in the public library.

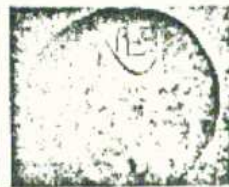
The coins were removed from public display in 1936 following two attempts to steal them, and they have been locked in a bank vault since then. The city claims it can't afford to pay for protecting them in a public place.

The Council has taken legal steps to secure the city's title to the coins, in case it ever does decide to sell them. By a 6-to-1 vote, it agreed Jan. 16 to pay Reed's heirs \$50,000 in exchange for their relinquishment of any claims on the collection.

"It is worth \$50,000" for the city to get clear title to the collection, Jacobberger said at the time.

Melvin Stark, curator of the Boys Town Museum, has described the Reed collection as the third best in the United States, ranking just behind the Ehrberg collection in Baltimore and the collection at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington.





# The Byron Reed Collection

## The author

Robert M. Vassell holds degrees in English from the University of Miami and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He has taught at David City and West Point, Neb., the College of St. Mary in Omaha, Huron College and Dakota Wesleyan University in South Dakota. Currently, he is a free lance writer and private tutor. Mr. Vassell is also secretary of the Byron Reed Historical Society.

The Byron Reed Collection — the same one the City of Omaha once proposed to sell — is more than just a coin collection or a bunch of books; it's history in microcosm.

The city, after public opinion against such a sale reached a high pitch, changed its mind.

But the suggestion to sell brought the need to place the collection in a permanent place on public display into the spotlight.

And what is the Byron Reed Collection? Precisely. It has 6,859 coins, 1,380 medals, 832 autographs, 1,836 books, 3,243 pamphlets, 615 Confederate bank notes and 2,136 other bank notes.

The coins in this collection tell stories of history — many phases of recorded history, from Greece and Rome through the 19th century European wars and the birth and growth of the United States.

Cleopatra's silver tetradrachm-size coinage, objects of great rarity, reveal a woman of extraordinary plainness, Elizabeth Taylor.

Coins from early Rome show a people who honored their gods, family life, patriotism and other virtues. The character of a people is exemplified in their coinage.

The pride of Athens was symbolized by an owl. Corinth used Pegasus. From the standpoint of aesthetics, the pinnacle in coinage was during the Cretan Fine Art Period, 480-280 B.C., when the muscular structure of man and animals was faithfully delineated, such as later showing Hercules wrestling a lion.

The degeneration of a culture seems coincidental with the debasement of the metal used in the coins. Caracalla's "clad" coinage moved from copper cores sandwiched between silver to less and less silver and more and more copper.

Coins issued by Pontius Pilate, Herod and Agrippa bear witness to Biblical history. The famous "widow's mite" is included.

All of the early stages of minting, from Croesus on, are represented in the collection.

European history is represented, too. Coins struck for Popes Innocent, Benedict, Clement, and the crowned heads of Europe are contained in the collection.

Perhaps the most famous piece in the European section is a cast version of Napoleon's Waterloo medal (See Plates I and II). Casts were made from copper electrotypes of the dies.

Benedetto Pistrucci, a highly controversial and talented medallist sculptor, was commissioned by the Prince Regent of England (George IV) to commemorate Wellington's victory over Napoleon. Pistrucci labored from 1817 to 1850 to create the 4 1/2-inch dies for the medal that never was struck. Because the original dies were considered extremely valuable, it was felt that the die-hardening process could damage the irreplaceable artwork of thirty-three years.

On the obverse (Plate I), are the four sovereigns who allied to overthrow Napoleon. From left, the Prince Regent of England, Francis II of Austria, Alexander I of Russia and Frederick II of Prussia. Surrounding the monarchs is the tale of victory followed by peace, told through the allegorical use of classical mythology. Clockwise are Apollo, Zephyr, Hercules, the Fates and the Furies, Thetis, Castor and Pollux.

The reverse (Plate II) has the commanders Wellington and Blicher on horseback with Victory between

## - more than just a collection

by Robert M. Vassell

them. About them, nineteen Titans representing nineteen years of war with Napoleon are being felled by the thunderbolts of Jupiter.

The march of American history and the development of American minting techniques are shown in coins from the extremely rare, yet relatively crude (by today's standards) New England Shilling of 1652 (See Plate III), the first coin struck in North America, to Augustus Saint-Gauden's beautiful George Washington medal, commemorating the one-hundredth anniversary of the inauguration of Washington, 1789-1889.

"Not Worth a Continental" never was a good adage. The 1776 dated Continental dollars, pattern pieces that never were circulated, were the first silver dollars minted by the United States. The Reed Collection features a fine pewter specimen of great rarity (See Plate IV). The obverse states "Mind Your Business". The reverse shows thirteen links in a chain, representing the original thirteen states, surrounding the proclamation "We Are One".

Civil War money includes restrikes of the 1861 Confederate cent (See Plate V) and half dollar. The cent restrikes were made by Pennsylvanian Robert Lovett, Jr. Fearing arrest by Union forces on charges of treason, Lovett sequestered the dies and coins in his



basement. Later, a Captain Haseltine purchased the dies and made restrikes in copper, silver, and gold. The halves were struck in New Orleans.

Byron Reed purchased the fabulous 1804 silver dollar for \$510. Numismatists have estimated this one coin's value as high as \$100,000, because of its great rarity. Opinion and various facts indicate that the 1804 was struck either in 1804 or between 1834-35. The obverse features the bust of Liberty with flowing hair (See Plate VI).

Then there are autographs of various signers of the Declaration of Independence, of Presidents, authors, and musicians, rare books on numismatics, and other precious documents, pamphlets, coins, medals, bonds, drafts and currency.

Not just things, the Byron Reed Collection forms a priceless part of our history, heritage, and culture.

The Metro, Febr. 28, 1973



## Reed Coins Pose Library Problems

The Omaha City Library director, Frank Gibson, recently admitted to a South Omaha Sun reporter, that the library "obviously" was "having some problems" in maintaining the literary portion of the Byron Reed coin collection.

A recent plan by the Library Association to sell off the Reed numismatic collection which was willed to the library in 1891, was successfully thwarted by the Omaha city council. The resultant controversy tended to kindle interest on the collection, which has not been available for viewing for some years, due to security problems posed by displaying it.

Together with one of the world's most complete collections of U.S. coins, the pioneer Omaha real estate baron left the library some 632 autographs, 1,836 numismatic books and 3,243 pamphlets. These are presently in a disorganized state, because, according to Gibson, "there has never been much public interest in the Reed documents, and the library has not had enough staff to organize the collection."

Only the autographs — housed in a wooden display case with sliding panels — are "as well displayed as possible," the library director conceded.

A Sun photographer who visited the library's third-floor collection room came away with pictorial evidence that more historical items than those in the Reed collection were suffering. A ledger of George Washington's Mount Vernon distillery, dating from 1799, was found lying askew on a lower shelf, and a 15th century book

of Gregorian chants was found atop a box on the floor, its hand-painted pages curled with misuse.

In defense of the conditions that prevail in the collection

Gibson noted that last year he requested \$8,868 to hire a librarian, who would be hired specifically to oversee and organize the Reed collection and other documents in the library's history center on the third floor. This request, however, was cut out of the budget.

He said a similar request for funds to hire a professional who could provide proper care for the collection — beyond just "custodial care" — will be included in this year's budget request.

*COIN WORLD*

3-7-73

*Not a coin  
The Reed collection  
is a treasure  
of historical  
documents  
and books  
which should  
be preserved  
and made  
available to  
the public.*





OMAHA, NEBRASKA  
Morning World-Herald  
D. 128,613 — S. 230,392  
OMAHA METROPOLITAN AREA

JUN 13 1973

## Mayor Picks Coin Panel

Mayor Zorinsky has recommended the appointment of six persons to a committee that would conduct a basic inventory of the Byron Reed collection of coins, medals and other objects.

Attorney Jerome Grossman was recommended as coordinator of the group. Others recommended are: Alfred B. Moore, past president of the Omaha Numismatic Association; Melvin D. Stark, curator of the Boys Town museum; Richard Fielding, president of the Omaha Coin Club; Mrs. Howard Fiedler, 1510 North Fifty-first Street, and Leonard M. Owen, 3602 North Fifty-second Street.

The appointments were to be considered today by the City Council.

The collection was left to the city by Reed, and heirs late last year signed agreements that they would not object if the city sold the collection. The present City Council has not decided whether the collection would be sold.



## Editorials

Unsigned articles on this page are the opinion of The World-Herald

## Let's Get On With the Library

City officials have never faced up to the need for a new downtown library, and we include a couple of generations of city officials.

In 1956, the Omaha Plan called the library "a disgrace to the city."

In 1945, the Citywide Planning Committee said it was "deplorable and hopelessly inadequate."

Public discussion about replacing or enlarging the 19th Century building goes back to 1909.

Meanwhile, a new city-county building is rising just across the street, a fact which serves to emphasize the inadequacy of the antiquated, inefficient library structure.

Meanwhile, too, Omaha has a new mayor and new City Council who are edged to moving the community ahead and who can look with a fresh eye on the library problem.

\* \* \*

The growth of branch libraries has in no way diminished the need for a main library to house hundreds of thousands of books and the films, records, tapes and research facilities of a modern metropolitan library system.

Questions less easy to answer are where the library should be located and how it should be financed.

Emphasis has been on the present location at Nineteenth and Harney, which the city already owns and which would make the library part of the city-county complex.

There are also plans to tie the library into the riverfront development program, putting it near the proposed downtown campus of the University of Nebraska at Omaha and the proposed linear park. That would be an attractive setting. Inclusion of the library is one more attractive argument for the riverfront program.

In recent months mention of financing the library almost invariably brings up the Byron Reed

coin collection. The last council toyed with the idea of selling the coins, which have not been appraised but which are believed to be worth upwards of \$1 million, and using the money to help finance the library.

No decision was made. The coins lie in a bank vault, an unused but rapidly appreciating asset because of the phenomenal demand for rare coins, and particularly for a collection of some 8,000 rare coins.

So long as the coins remain hidden, they are not being used for the good of the community. They are not on display because there is no city-owned place where round-the-clock security for such a treasure can be maintained.

The new council should resolve the question whether the coins are a museum-type civic asset worth keeping and displaying or whether they are quite literally just money in the bank.

\* \* \*

If the Byron Reed collection is indeed one of a half dozen or so of its kind, something almost unique, an attraction that local citizens and tourists should be enjoying, then the community should raise the money to house and display it. And its home should obviously be the library to which Byron Reed gave it.

If it is not that kind of attraction, then sale for library construction purposes is worth discussing. But it seems to us that officials should be sure there is no other way of paying for the library before they give up the coin collection.

It has become a bad habit to let the library problem lag and get lost in the shuffle. We think we speak for many Omahans in asking the new city government to face the problem and make the decisions that will bring the community a downtown library.

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The appointments were to be considered today by the City Council.

The collection was left to the city by Reed, and heirs late last year signed agreements that they would not object if the city sold the collection. The present City Council has not decided whether the collection would be sold.

## Coin Leasing Faces Vote

An ordinance will be presented to the City Council next week to permit leasing of the Byron Reed Coin Collection, Councilman John Hlavacek said.

Hlavacek heads a committee which has recommended that the coins be auctioned to private businesses for display for a limited period.

The coins have been kept from public view for several years because of the cost of security. Hlavacek said the committee hopes to divide the coins so that no display would be so valuable as to be a prohibitive security risk.

He said he hopes to have about 25 displays. The first auction is planned in November so that businesses can display coins during the Christmas shopping season, he said.



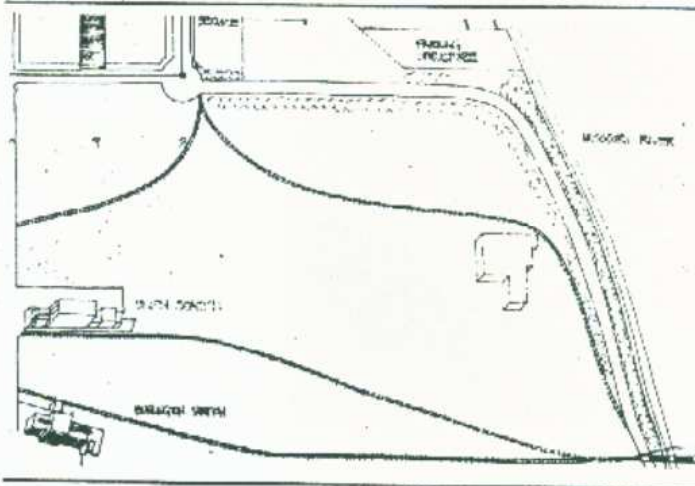
# Criswell Proposes ANA Move, If...

On the eve of learning the election results, Grover C. Criswell, candidate for president, announced that he would be in favor of moving the ANA headquarters "lock, stock, and barrel" to Omaha, Nebraska, "if", Criswell said, "we could be assured of becoming curators in perpetuity of the famous multi-million dollar Byron F. Reed collection."

Criswell revealed that he had been in touch with a number of interested numismatists in the Omaha area and also with the mayor and planning director of the city of Omaha and had learned that the city probably within a year would be able to take possession of the beautiful old Burlington Railroad Station Building, (now occupied by Am-Track).

This building is located only a short distance from the Union Station, of which the city has already taken possession. A bright future is predicted for the former railroad complex as a part of a beautiful new municipal development along the waterfront.

"The development is already under way in the Union Station" Criswell said,



Blueprint of Burlington Railroad Station area in Omaha.

"and it would be a really ideal situation for the ANA to gain an already needed 'larger' museum area and building."

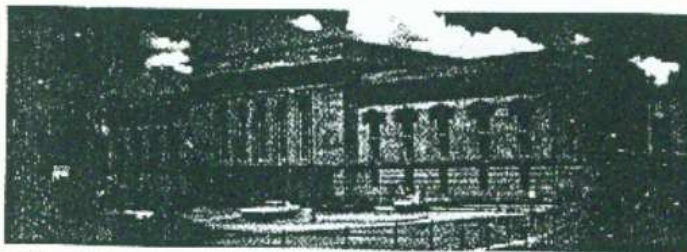
The Burlington Station building has over 50,000 square feet of space and would have unlimited parking area and be easy to secure because of its location. In addition it is only eight blocks from the police station."

Then again Omaha is much

more centrally located than Colorado Springs and is more easily accessible by air, rail and highway to the great populated centers of the U.S.

"The reason I made this public at this time," said Criswell, "is because first of all the election is over, and secondly, I wanted it made a matter of public record that if the Byron Reed collection and this building became available to the

(Continued on Page 5)



## Proposed ANA Site...

(Continued from Page 1)

ANA, I or other members of the board should be aware of the great advantages that might accrue to our association through pursuit of such an idea.

"I personally was strongly criticized by our ANA treasurer, Bill Henderson, a former Colorado Springs mayor (and one of those largely responsible for locating us there,) who apparently heard of my statement that I did favor relocating for the Byron Reed collection."

While Colorado Springs is a beautiful place, the city has not really "come through" with much help. The talk a couple of years back about some financial assistance

from the El Pomar Foundation has subsided with no results, and as recently as last February, I found various listings of "things to see in Colorado Springs" that did not even include our headquarters and museum," said Criswell.

Criswell said, "I'm pretty sure that I have won the election at this point, but win or lose, I'll still be active for the ANA. I wouldn't run against George Hattie for president but rather will run for Vice-president two years from now if I should lose."

"George Hattie has worked hard for the ANA, both as the best attorney the association ever had during trying times and as a member of the board."



# Unique Plan to Auction Byron Reed Collection Displays in Nebraska

The fabulous Byron Reed collection of U.S., ancient, foreign and medieval coins, tokens, medals and patterns, will be auctioned in a unique manner during the first week in November by the Omaha City Council.

The sale will be conducted to determine who gains the privilege to display—not purchase—small parcels of the multimillion dollar collection started by Reed, who died shortly before the turn of the century.

Required is a minimum bid of \$500 to win exclusive display rights of one of 25 portions of the collection, among the finest in the nation. The minimum bid, the News was advised, is exclusive of insurance and display costs, which must be borne by the

winning bidder.

The plan was announced at a news conference Sept. 9 by Omaha City Councilman John Hlavacek, a member of the Committee to Inventory the Reed Collection. "Each winning bidder shall have the right to use the exhibit in its advertising and public relations policies for the next year from Dec. 1, 1973, to Nov. 30, 1974," Hlavacek said.

The collection is the property of the Byron Reed Historical Society. Under terms of Reed's will, a primary stipulation is that the coins and other items of the collection be exhibited.

Following several robbery attempts of the exhibit, the collection was removed to bank

(UNIQUE, Page 6)

## UNIQUE

(From Page 1)

vaults in 1965. Several of Reed heirs have challenged removal of the exhibition, stating that under the will, if collection is not placed before public, it returns to the heirs.

Hlavacek wants to "get valuable collection — value not only monetarily — historically — out where public could enjoy it." Sale exhibit rights to the collector would accomplish that goal.

Omaha city officials hope find facilities to display the collection permanently. Jeri P. Grossman, a coordinator of the Reed collection committee said "numerous plans are being considered."

One plan is to convert the Union Rail Road Station into museum. This idea frequently been linked with American Numismatic Association's move from Colorado Springs, Colo., Omaha, a proposal advocated Grover C. Criswell, unsuccessful 1973 candidate for the presidency.

Criswell would have moved ANA "lock, stock and barrel" Omaha and become curator of the Reed collection. The Colorado Springs site would have been abandoned. 10-2-73



Displaying the 1804-dollar . . . From left, Hlavacek, Zorinsky and Moore. —World-Herald Photo.

## 1804 Silver Dollar 31 Years Late

The 1804 silver dollar in the Byron Reed coin collection isn't really from 1804.

It actually was made in about 1835, according to Alfred B. Moore, a member of the Byron Reed Historical Society.

The coin, one of a handful in existence, was shown to Mayor Zorinsky Tuesday prior to being returned to a bank vault.

It is insured for \$120,000. Over

the weekend, it was shown at a meeting of the Omaha Coin Club, the first display in eight to 10 years, Moore said.

The coin previously had been shown at the main Public Library, but it and the rest of the Reed collection were moved to a vault after theft attempts.

The City Council has passed an ordinance allowing the collection to be rented to business-

es for display. Councilman John Hlavacek said businessmen may bid on the displays at an auction in about a month.

About the date on the coin, Moore said a few silver dollars were minted about 1835 for presentation to East Asian potentates. The 1804 date was on the coins because that was the last previous year silver dollars had been minted, he said. 11-6-73

Although Omaha city officials are said to be "receptive" to such an idea, some ANA officials are privately "perplexed" at the proposal.

"If we moved from Colorado Springs to Omaha," one ANA official said. "We would have to give up the facilities which we built in Colorado. This represents a lot of money. Moreover, if we became curators of the Reed collection, we would have to pay the insurance, which would be astronomical."

Grossman said several other ideas are under "active consideration." One is restoration of Union Station without participation by the ANA. Another is using space in the new library being built in Omaha.

"The library is going to be four square blocks," Grossman said "and they're considering housing the collection there."

Also a possibility, Grossman said, is occupying a room in the new City-County Building, being erected in Omaha. "That would make a good site, too," Grossman said.

Grossman said a significant portion of the Reed collection



# Reed Collection Exhibits Plan Finds Favor

A proposal which could put the Byron Reed Coin collection back on public display met with generally favorable reaction Monday from city officials.

City Councilman John Hlavacek Sunday suggested that the collection, valued at more than \$1 million, be separated into several displays and — using an auction procedure — leased to business firms for one year.

The coins have been in bank vaults since 1966, soon after two attempts were made to steal them from the Main Library.

"The suggestion has merit. What good is a hidden collection which belongs to the public?" Mayor Zorinsky said.

"Splitting the risk" by dividing the collection among several exhibitors probably would make it feasible for exhibitors to pay security costs, he said.

## No. 1 Concern

Councilmen Steve Rosenblatt,

Monte Taylor and Jerry Hassett generally favored the idea.

"I've always felt the city should keep the coins and they should be available to the public," Rosenblatt said. "Security is my No. 1 concern about the display proposal. If that can be worked out, I have no objection."

Taylor said: "It's a good idea, but I don't know if firms would have enough interest to pay the costs to display the coins."

The proposal should be discussed more before a decision, Hassett said.

The proposed display could give the council a reading of public interest in the coins and be a guide in deciding whether the city should keep or sell the collection, he said.

## Goes to Committee

Selling the coins to help finance a downtown library has been discussed. The collection recently passed from the super-

vision of the library to a committee set up by the city.

City Atty. Herbert M. Fittle said the proposal requires City Council approval. A similar ordinance was passed when items from the old City Hall were auctioned several years ago, he noted.

He said the City Legal Department is preparing such an ordinance and that it will include provisions for liability insurance by the exhibitor, and whatever other safeguards the council may require.

Hlavacek said he earlier checked with the legal department and believed an ordinance was not necessary. He said he sees no problem with introducing an ordinance.

Hlavacek, the city's representative on the committee appraising the 8,000 coins and other objects, said the auction would be the first week in November.

## About 25 Displays

The American and colonial coins, considered the most valu-

able, would be offered first, he said. Other auctions would be held as various sections of the collection are inventoried.

There will be about 25 displays, he said.

Successful bidders would agree to pay the cost of the display and of insurance.

The committee set a minimum bid of \$500, Hlavacek said. Money received would be put into a trust to maintain the collection, he said.

Successful bidders could use the coins for one year for advertising and public relations programs.

Chancellor Ronald Roskens of the University of Nebraska at Omaha will be the auctioneer, Hlavacek said.

## Byron Reed Coin Goes on Display At Omaha Show

The 1804 silver dollar in the Byron Reed collection on display by the city of Omaha, Neb., will be on display at the Omaha Coin Club's 11th annual coin show Nov. 3-4 in the Omaha Hilton Hotel.

No Reed collection coins have been exhibited publicly since 1966. The event Nov. 3-4 marks the beginning of a major change in this practice.

Councilman John Hlavacek, at a recent Omaha City Council meeting, proposed that the collection be divided into several displays and leased to city businesses for one year by auction. Proceeds from the auction would be used to maintain the collection.

Hlavacek represents the city as a mayoral appointed committee to catalog the collection. Soule is a museum to house the aggregation of coins, currency, medals, documents, books, autographs, newspapers and other artifacts.

The late Byron Reed willed the collection, considered among the finest, to the citizens of Omaha with the provision that the public share access to it "part or all the time free of charge."

Now stored in bank vaults, the collection survived several robbery attempts in the 1960s. Collection committee members and city officials are open to suggestions for housing the material. Being considered are sites in the old Union Railroad Station, new City Library and new City-County Building.

## Committee at Work

# Reed Coin Collection Gets a Going-over

Evaluation is underway of the Byron Reed coin collection, work on the coins at a secure location. He declined to name it much discussed in recent months after it was suggested for security reasons.

the city sell it to raise money for a new downtown library. "We are starting with some of the foreign coins and tradesmen's tokens," said Grossman, an attorney and coin enthusiast.

The City Council has not taken a position on keeping or selling the coins, but did approve Mayor Zorinsky's appointment of a volunteer committee to catalogue and appraise the 8,000 coins, medals and other objects.

The committee, which includes Councilman John Hlavacek as the city's representative, working one or two evenings a week on a volunteer basis, he took over the role of custodian of the collection from the library said.

In mid-August. The collection, believed to be worth more than \$1 million, has been kept in bank vaults since 1966 after two robbery attempts at the downtown library, where they were displayed.

Jerome Grossman, committee coordinator, said a small portion of the less valuable coins has been taken out of the vaults and work has begun to arrange them in categories.

He said committee members work on the coins at a secure location. He declined to name it for security reasons.

"They are difficult to identify. Some are so old they do not have the country or the name of the ruler printed on them," he said.

Committee members, picked for their knowledge of coins, are working one or two evenings a week on a volunteer basis, he said.

It probably will take "in excess of six months" to evaluate the collection, Grossman said.

No complete list now exists of the articles in the collection, given to the city by the late Byron Reed in 1894.

The most valuable pieces are believed to be the American coins, which some coin experts say is one of the most complete collections of this country's early coins.

7-1-73-2



# Reed Coin Value Now at \$3 Million

By Michael Kelly

The Byron Reed coin collection apparently is worth about 3 million, City Councilman John Hlavacek said Monday.

Previous estimate of the collection's value was "more than \$1 million."

Hlavacek, the city's representative on a committee that is cataloguing and evaluating the coins, said, however, that it will be months before any parts of the collection can be displayed.

"It's a big job," Hlavacek said. "We work two nights a week for two hours. It takes time."

The collection was at the downtown library until 1965, when it was moved to a bank vault because of attempts to break into the library.

The City Council last fall authorized an auction giving high bidders the right to display parts of the collection for a year in connection with public relations or advertising.

Hlavacek said he had hoped the auction could be held the first week of last November, so the displays would be ready for the Christmas shopping season.

But the 25 displays — which would not comprise the entire collection — aren't quite ready, Hlavacek said.

The councilman said he hoped to have the auction televised by a local television station. The auction would be a formal

black-tie affair for bankers and other invited bidders.

"This is a very special collection, and the auction should be handled in a very special way," Hlavacek said.

He said none of the three Omaha stations has responded favorably. He has discussed having the auction on the state's educational television station, but officials said it would have to be after the station's auction, which is in May.

At one time, city officials considered selling the collection to raise money toward a downtown library. That was rejected, with the plan to get the collection in front of the public again.

Hlavacek said that's still the goal of the volunteer group

cataloguing the coins. But the job is so monumental, he said, that it may be 1976 before the entire Reed collection, including some pamphlets and other items, is completed. The plan is to make sections public as cataloguing is completed, he said.

The others on the committee are coin collectors Jerome Grossman, Leonard Owen, Melvin Stark, Al Moore and Robert Vassell.

## Reed Coin Auction Delayed

The Byron Reed Coin Collection won't be displayed during the Christmas season as hoped, City Councilman John Hlavacek said Tuesday.

"The details of getting it ready have just been overwhelming for the small group working on it," Hlavacek said. "It won't be before the first of the year now."

The coins, locked in a bank vault for eight years, are to be divided into 25 displays and auctioned to businessmen who would have the right to display them for a year.

The City Council authorized the auction and display several weeks ago. It might be mid-January before the auction is held, Hlavacek said. He heads a committee of eight preparing the coins.

## Coin display would please Reed

THE COIN COLLECTION of Byron Reed has been a thorny problem for the City of Omaha since Mr. Reed died in 1891.

The collection, along with land at 19th and Harney streets, was willed to the city by Mr. Reed on condition that a library be built on the ground and the coins be displayed in a special room.

The library was built but, although the coin collection was displayed for a time, the coins have spent most of this century in bank vaults and behind iron-barred doors — protected against those who would rather steal them than view them.

Now, because of the innovative thinking of Omaha Councilman John Hlavacek, it is possible local citizens will have a chance to examine some or all of the coins. The coins will be offered for lease by local businesses interested in displaying portions of the collection.

the City Council recently, is for the collection to be leased by up to 25 businessmen and then displayed for the public's benefit. The plan permits the coins to be dispersed throughout the city and, in theory, reduces the chance that the collection will be stolen.

Actually, just the fact that the coins will once again be on public display will increase the possibility that a portion of the collection will be stolen. But the lease will require businessmen to be responsible for protecting the coins and also to provide insurance coverage, even though a few coins would be difficult or impossible to replace.

The danger of theft, however, is outweighed by the value to be gained in allowing citizens of Omaha to see the famous Byron Reed collection. Mr. Reed never meant for his coins to be hidden from public view, and we feel sure he would endorse the council's move to assure everyone an opportunity to enjoy one of Omaha's most

## 'Cleopatra' No Beauty

FOR some time a dozen or so coin experts have met at a downtown bank vault twice a week for the purpose of cataloguing and evaluating the city-owned Byron Reed coin collection. One of their conclusions so far: Cleopatra was no beauty.

"She was really quite a homely woman," said project head Robert Hilt.

That appraisal is based upon likenesses of Cleo found on several ancient Roman coins. The coins, circulated some 2,000 years ago, endowed the so-called temptress of the Nile with features that are anything but impressive, Hilt said.

"We all seem to be agreed on that," he said. "Everybody wonders what Julius Caesar and Mark Anthony saw in her."

Since coin designers usually find it expedient to present likenesses of rulers in a flattering light, it was as-



Temptress?

umed that Cleo must have taxed the artist's integrity to the fullest.

## Nothing New

FOOTNOTE to the Hilt report: The study of ancient coins in the Reed collection has convinced the group that in terms of hair styles there is nothing new under the sun.

"We found all of today's hairdos on the old coins, with one exception," Hilt said. "The style we didn't find was the Afro."





# In 83 Years, Some Coins Disappeared

By Al Frisbie

Mysteries of a kind to intrigue a Sherlock Holmes are confronting Omaha volunteers currently cataloging the city's Byron Reed collection.

Spokesmen for the group say the collection today does not include all the coins and paper money apparently bequeathed to the city nearly 83 years ago by the pioneer real estate man.

Records show some duplicate coins have been removed and some currency believed to have been a part of the collection has not been found.

Still, it appears the really valuable pieces are intact, they say.

How much the collection is worth will not be known until a full cataloging and evaluation are completed — perhaps in a year.

Surprisingly, no such inventory has been completed since the collection was willed to Omaha in 1891.

One evaluation committee member, who declined use of his name, "guessed" the final value of the collection, might fall short of the \$3-million estimate placed on it last month by Councilman John Hlavacek, the city's representative on the committee. But the member predicted its value would be substantially more than the \$1 million figure that has been mentioned in the past.

## Old Ledgers

Committee coordinator Jerome Grossman, an Omaha attorney, said two aged ledgers provide some indication concerning the coin contents of the original collection.

Hand-written entries in one book list United States coins apparently involved in the Reed bequest. Foreign coins are itemized in another book.

Some think the ledgers were maintained by Byron Reed, Grossman said, but there is no date or name in the books to verify that.

The ledgers contain frequent notations that "duplicates" of certain coins had been removed.

Grossman and Leonard Owen, a former coin shop operator and a member of the committee appointed by Mayor Zorinsky to appraise and organize the collection, noted that Byron Reed's will gave certain relatives per-

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# After 83 Years, Some Coins Reed Gave to City Are Gone

Continued from Page 1.

mission to remove duplicate coins.

But the two committee members said the entries in the ledgers do not reveal who removed the coins or when. And a duplicate to someone may be a keepsake to another, Grossman said.

## No Answer

Coins of the same denomination can be minted at different sites within the same year, he noted, and coins fashioned in one mint in one year can be made from different dies with small differences which are meaningful to collectors.

Who knows, he said, that when a duplicate was removed, the better of two coins was not taken?

Obviously, there is no answer.

Correspondence from yesterday adds to the mysteries. One, dated 1909, refers to gold apparently stolen from the collection.

In a copy of a letter dated July 30, 1909, then librarian Edith Tobitt wrote the library's board of directors concerning certain "lists" of American and state coins and pattern pieces "in the Byron Reed collection."

The lists, she wrote, had been prepared by a doctor who had "given almost every morning (for a month and a half) to the work." Her letter added the doctor "suggests we replace as much of the gold (as possible) which was stolen some time ago." She then suggested that because of the doctor's volunteer efforts "may we not present (him) some of the duplicate coins which are not needed in our collection."

A notation at the bottom of the letter indicates the board authorized the library to "make exchanges with (the doctor) for any of our duplicate coins."

## Foreign Coins

Grossman and others on the committee do not know how much gold was stolen or if it was recovered. "We do not know how many duplicate coins the doctor exchanged," Grossman said, "or whether the board gave other people similar permission at other times."

He and others feel that some removal of foreign coin duplicates may have been made without notation. Such coins were not valued highly then, he said, and it is not likely a recipient of a duplicate would feel it was worth mentioning.



A magnified look . . . Mrs. Owen studies coin.

Another mystery concerns what has happened to several hundred paper notes, including some Confederate currency.

The committee has a paper dated Feb. 7, 1903, listing several pages of Confederate currency apparently included in the collection. Yet, committee members say, only a few such bills have been found.

The loss, Owen said, is not great "monetarily speaking. Confederate bills are still comparatively common."

What happened to the missing bills? One indication is found in a copy of the June 4, 1925, minutes of the Library Board meeting in which a museum committee member "reported on . . . obtaining additional specimens of memorial and commemorative coins or tokens for the Byron Reed collection."

## 3 Cents a Bill

The member noted "that duplicates of obsolete paper money had been discarded (with an estimated value of \$58.50) and that 31 pieces of commemorative coins and tokens obtained which bore a value of \$67.45."

Owen, a collector of paper currency, said that in 1925 obsolete paper money was selling to dealers for perhaps 3 cents a bill — thus some 1,950 such bills may have been sold to obtain funds for the 31 commemorative coins and tokens.

But, he said, the 1925 minutes refer to "duplicates." If so, where are all the bills listed in the 1903 report?

No one knows.

And why, when the Byron Reed collection contains one of the finer arrays of United States coins, has no complete cataloging of it ever been done?

Coin authorities here say lack of funds may have been deciding factor.

Such undertakings, they say, are expensive and the Reed collection is believed to contain some 8,000 pieces. Unless knowledgeable volunteers such as those conducting the present study could have been found, charges would have been prohibitive.

## Custodian

The Public Library was custodian of the collection from 1903 until last year. Frank Gibson, library director, said he and library board organized such project in the early 1960s. A World-Herald story reported inventory of a part of the collection appraised that portion \$634,000. But after at least unsuccessful robbery attempt (one in 1963, one in 1965),

entire collection was transferred to bank vaults, where it remains.

Gibson, who joined the library staff in 1953, said at that time the collection was displayed in special library room and kept under lock, key and burglar alarm system linked directly to the Central Police Station. He said he has a drawing of alarm system, apparently drawn in 1917, but does not know how the collection was protected prior to that time.

Meanwhile, Omahans involved in the current checking and cataloging, meet twice a week. Members receive no pay; spend two hours at each nightly session. They work in groups "that's our own internal security system," said Grossman. Coins are inspected, frequently measured, placed in see-through packets containing their catalogue number, and arranged according to country.



## Sealed Box

When all the coins from one country have been examined and packaged, they are placed in a sealed box and a card index noting each of the coins is filed. Once we're finished, said Owen, "we'll be able to tell if a coin is missing and what coin it was."

When the present audit is completed, he said, the group will not know what may be missing from the original collection "because we're really not sure what was there to begin with."

Owen, a former president of the Omaha Coin Club, said he will recommend the city take further steps to protect the integrity of the collection after the evaluation and cataloging are completed.

He said he and others will recommend the city photograph the majority of the American coins and some of the more valuable foreign coins (several thousand in all) as a protection against anyone switching one coin for another.

## 'Pedigree'

He said he also would suggest the collection's major coins (not more than 50) be "authenticated" by the American Numismatic Association, a procedure which would give the city a "pedigree" for the rare coins.

Owen, who was among those making the partial survey of the collection about 10 years ago, said a check last year showed all coins catalogued then "are intact."

Among those involved in the present inventory which began last August, are Melvin Stark, curator of the Boys Town Museum, and coin shop owner Al Moore. Both are former presidents of the Nebraska Numismatic Association. Others include truck firm co-owner Robert Hilt, Mrs. Owen and Robert Vassell, former Dakota Wesleyan English instructor now a private tutor and free-lance writer in Omaha.



—World-Herald Photos.

Checking collection coins with catalogues . . . From left, Mrs. Owen, Stark and Owen.

44-7-74

*When audit  
are made  
of the coins?*





Mel Stark (R), curator of the Boys Town Philamatic center, shows a portion of the recently mounted Bicentennial exhibit to visitors, from left, Eugene Leahy, former Omaha mayor, Rev. Robert P. Hupp,

director of Boys Town, John Hlavacek, city councilman, and Mrs. Best, who was instrumental in bringing the Byron Reed collection to Boys Town, its first public exhibition in a decade.

## Boys Town launches exhibit for nation's Bicentennial

American Colonial coins and medals from the famed city of Omaha's Byron Reed collection have been loaned to Boys Town, Neb., as a portion of the home's Philamatic Center Bicentennial exhibit, mounted recently.

This is the first public showing of any of the Reed coins since they were returned to a bank vault in 1965 after two attempts were made to steal the collection from the Omaha Public Library where it was once housed.

Joining the Reed coins and medals are Colonial currency and other items from the Boys Town collection.

On display from the Byron Reed collection are a Getz half dollar in silver; New England shilling; Myddelton token in Proof; Talbot Allum and Lee cent, Uncirculated;

Standish Barry threepence, and a silver original of the Castorland medal in Proof.

In addition, pillar and portrait type pieces of eight and their counterparts from Spanish Mexico, are shown.

The Libertas Americana, Washington Before Boston and a number of Congressional pieces dealing with the Revolutionary War are included in the medal collection.

A set of wooden pieces in original box made for the Centennial celebration in 1876 are shown along with other Centennial and Washington inauguration Centennial medals of 1889.

Byron Reed willed his extensive numismatic holdings to the city of Omaha upon his death June 6, 1891. A real estate broker in the

city, he amassed a vast fortune and built up a fine library of rare books and manuscripts in addition to his coin collection.

At the time of his death, he was said to have the fifth or sixth most complete collection in the U.S. Comprising most all U.S. issues to that time, Reed had also amassed an important collection of Greek and Roman coins.

In addition to his numismatic holdings, Reed bequeathed land for a site for the free public library which was also to house his collections of rare coins, books, manuscripts and documents. The bequest was valued at the time at six figures.

Colonial and Continental Currency from the Boys Town collection is also being exhibited. This collection contains approx-

See next page



# Boys Town PhilaMatic Center observes 25th anniversary

imately 500 notes and includes pieces printed by Benjamin Franklin and notes printed from plates engraved by Paul Revere. Blue paper varieties and a number of uncut sheets are also displayed.

Another part of the Boys Town Bicentennial exhibit features autographs of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Of the 56 patriots who signed the Declaration, signatures of 32 of the signers are on display.

Documents bearing the signatures of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams and John Hancock are also shown. A letter signed by George Washington is included in this display.

The Boys Town Philamatic Center was opened in July, 1951, and is chiefly comprised of the extensive stamp and coin holdings donated to Boys Town by Dwight A. Barrett, an Omaha philatelist.

The display is sponsored jointly by the center and the Omaha-Douglas County Bicentennial Commission. The public is invited.

Boys Town, Neb., PhilaMatic Center celebrated its 25th anniversary on July 1 with an open house.

Guests attending the event had the opportunity to view the nearly 5,000 coins, tokens and medals exhibited by the center. Also displayed were nearly 9,000 pieces of paper money, believed by PhilaMatic Center curator Mel Stark to be the largest such exhibit in the world.

Among these notes are a Chinese Imperial Bank note used 100 years before the discovery of America; a large U.S. Fractional Currency collection, notes issued

by the United Colonies in denominations of two-thirds and one-sixth of a dollar, and a complete collection of Confederate States of America issues.

In commemoration of the nation's Bicentennial, the PhilaMatic Center featured a special display which featured American Colonial coins and medals, and 500 notes, many of which had been printed by Benjamin Franklin. Among the latter were pieces carrying the signatures of 32 of the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence.

In addition to the exhibits of

coins and paper money, visitors viewed collections of stamps, documents, paintings, pre-Columbian artifacts and the "Oscar" trophy won by actor Spencer Tracy for his part in the movie, "Boys Town."

The PhilaMatic Center was formed July 1, 1951, when Dwight O. Barrett, a retired mechanical engineer from Tulsa, Okla., presented to Boys Town 200 frames of stamps and coins which he had collected.

The collection has grown in the last 25 years to 650 frames of

★ Please turn to page 9

## Center marks anniversary

### FROM PAGE 1

coins, stamps and other pieces, acquired through donations from private individuals to the center.

The special exhibit of Colonial material was loaned for the event by the city of Omaha, from the famed Byron Reed collection, and the open house represented the first time in 10 years that this

material had been displayed publicly.

Stark estimates that more than a million visitors have seen the displays in the PhilaMatic Center in the last quarter century. "And we'll continue to admit visitors free of charge 361½ days a year for many, many more years," he said.



Confederate States note specialist Grover Criswell (L), vice president and governor of the American Numismatic Association, admires a note pointed out to him by PhilaMatic Center curator Mel Stark during July 1 open house at the center, held to commemorate its 25th anniversary.



Attractive and graceful, Mary Melissa Perkins was a prospective prize for the bachelors who crowded into early Omaha looking for wives and fortunes.

The pursuit by suitors was too much for her to bear alone.

"Which one should I marry?" she asked a friend.

The friend, surveying the men of 1860 Omaha, suggested an older man, "Mr. Byron Reed, because he is the one who is going to make the most money."

It was good advice. Mary Perkins, daughter of a Florence merchant who sold grain to pioneers passing through Omaha, married Byron Reed in 1862. He was 33. She was 16, a not-so-uncommon marrying age for women in those days.

In an interview on her 90th birthday in 1935, Mrs. Reed recalled her early impressions of Byron:

"There were several suitors, but I rather thought Mr. Reed was the finest of them. He was sober and hard-working."

### Worth \$2 Million

Reed went on to accumulate one of the largest fortunes in Omaha.

The World-Herald said in an obituary shortly after his death June 6, 1891: "He was to Omaha what the Astors were to New York."

When he died at 62 after a lengthy illness, his net worth was more than \$2 million, most of it in real estate. He was, up to the time, the city's richest man.

Reed was born March 12, 1829 in Darien, N.Y., scion of a family that traced its line to the Puritans. The Reeds moved to Wisconsin, and Byron went later to Cleveland. From 1849 to 1855, he was a telegrapher there. He came to Omaha Nov. 10, 1855 but, in a few weeks, left for Kansas where he was a correspondent for The New York Tribune.

He covered the bloody Kansas "border ruffian war" between anti- and pro-slavery forces. Reporters were targets for both sides. One correspondent friend of Reed's was killed in the action. At Leavenworth, his reporter's cover blown, Reed fled at night and made his way to Omaha, leaving his reporting career behind forever.

### Violinist

He arrived here without money but with, as The World-Herald said in an 1891 editorial, "the traits of industry and self-reliance of his Puritan ancestors."

He was an accomplished violinist. He played to earn money to pay for his meals. He also was a town booster. According to one account, he saw a man lingering near a local bank and recognized him as a "ruffian" from Kansas. Reed alerted oth-

# Byron Reed

## He Became Omaha's Richest Man



Reed home at Twenty-fifth and Dodge Streets . . . Later was first Boys Town building.

ers, and they sat up all night guarding the banks. There never was a robbery.

After jobs surveying and deed recording with the city and county, Reed went into the real estate business.

The Byron Reed Co. which he founded in March 1856 is the oldest real estate firm in the state. But the Reed family sold its interest long ago.

(The N. P. Dodge Co., a long-time competitor, was organized at the turn of the century by Nathan Phillips Dodge II. It remains in that family.)

Reed owned land in at least 31 additions to the town site, several lots in the original plat and more than 357 acres spread over what is now an area generally west of Seventy-second Street.

Byron Reed's shadow is visible in Omaha to this day. Subdivisions he platted are among the city's oldest neighborhoods.

He invested all he earned in land and in his coin and rare book collecting passion. He encouraged others to buy land and to build on it.

Reed's advice is said to have helped many to build small fortunes. A news story in 1891 related: "Mr. Reed sold lots for

\$50 to \$100 that are worth from \$3,000 to \$20,000 today." Reed also had an income from renting out some of his property.

The World-Herald said in an editorial: "He was a strict landlord who was eminently just and was recognized as an authority on land questions. No one could ever assert that he amassed his fortune by grinding the faces of the poor."

### Anonymous Donor

Taciturn, a man who was self-contained, and reticent about his plans and business, Reed gave anonymously to Trinity Cathedral, and to charity.

His business skill propelled him to great fame. He and his wife moved from their home at Sixteenth and Dodge Streets (where the First National Center now stands) into one of the city's earliest large mansions. It was at Twenty-fifth and Dodge Streets. Reed added a billiard room and conservatory. The library was stocked with richly-bound books.

There was a huge safe in the middle of one wall. Inside, Reed's valuable collections grew through the years.

He managed to assemble an

almost complete set of Omaha's first newspaper, The Arrow. Printed between July 28 and Nov. 10, 1854. The Arrow went to press whenever paper was available. Reed got 12 of the 13 editions and missed only No. 6. It was never located. The collection is in the public library's archives.

### Mansion Razed

The huge Reed house at Twenty-fifth and Dodge Streets, where Byron died, became the first home of Boys Town. Father Edward J. Flanagan rented it after Mrs. Reed and her two children moved to another house at 503 South Thirty-sixth Street.

Boys Town was at Twenty-fifth and Dodge from Dec. 12, 1917 to June 1, 1918. The mansion has been razed and a service station now occupies the site.

Mrs. Reed lived to become a gray haired, handsome woman eminent in the city's social life. Her home on Thirty-sixth Street was on the "Gold Coast," a neighborhood sprinkled with mansions and stretching from Thirty-second Avenue to Fortieth Street and from Davenport to Jones Streets.



Ben Sylvester, retired World-Herald city editor, writing the "West Farnam Story," an account of the families living in those mansions, said of Mrs. Reed: "She was a charming woman."

Before her death March 5, 1943 when she was 98, Mrs. Reed passed on some advice to young women: "I don't know what can bring a woman greater satisfaction than making other people happy."

Her husband had passed to Omaha a larger legacy.

### 'Stunning'

Reed willed the land for the old downtown library. But his greatest gift was the coin and rare book and letters collections he gave the city. The collections remain intact.

Lawyer Jerome Grossman, who is coordinating a panel of experts evaluating the coins, said the collection is "stunning." Its value may exceed \$3 million, he said. Stored in various banks vaults in the city, the collection includes more than 8,000 coins and medals and paper money. It is especially rich in Greek and Roman coins. There is a near complete set of American coins.

The book collection includes the work of monks of the Middle Ages. One book of the 15th century, illustrated in a blaze of colors, is bound in velvet.

It is almost impossible to translate what Reed was worth at the time of his death into modern dollars. Dr. Theodore Roesler, acting chairman of the economics department, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said there are few government price indexes going back to 1891.

But, said Roesler, the value of the dollar has increased at least seven times since then. That would place Reed's wealth today at at least \$14 million.

Early stories about the wealth indicate the \$2 million fortune did not include the coin and book collections. The assets tabulated were mainly real estate and cash.



Reed ... died in 1891.



Mrs. Reed ... 1935 photo.

## Heirs Stay Out of Spotlight

None of Byron and Mary Reed's descendants, including their two children, reached his prominence or wealth. Like Reed himself, the heirs to this day shun public exposure.

Robert Best, 2317 North Fifty-fifth Street, Reed's great grandson, said he doesn't know how the original fortune has been dispersed. Much of it, according to news stories and local history books, was split among numerous heirs and found its way into charity. Taxes whittled away at it, too.

Other descendants remaining in Omaha are Best's mother, Mrs. R. Russell Best, Reed's granddaughter and wife of a retired surgeon, and Robert Best's sister, Mrs. Guy Moore. A brother, Thomas, lives in Montana. There are other descendants living as far away as California.

Robert Best said the family's knowledge of Reed has come mostly from letters and other memorabilia. Because Reed died so long ago, Best said, "We really didn't know him."

After Byron Reed's death, the real estate company went to his son, A.L. (for Abraham Lincoln) Reed.

The younger Reed also was secretary of the Fontenelle Hotel Association which financed and built the hotel. He was a director of the United States National Bank which, in 1929, bought the Byron Reed Co. The bank shortly afterward sold the company to Linn Campbell, James Nickerson and Charles E. Peterson Sr. Peterson's son Charles Jr., is now president. A. L. Reed died



—World Herald Photo.

Best ... Great grandson.

at 87 on May 27, 1957.

His sister, Maria Reed, married Frank B. Johnson who, unlike his in-laws, was outgoing and flamboyant.

Ben Sylvester, the "West Farnam Story" author, wrote that the marriage was not blessed by the Reeds. A son of a Plattsmouth-area general store owner, Johnson "played poker for high stakes, and pool, and the stock market and didn't attend church regularly," Sylvester wrote.

"Mrs. Reed had in mind for her daughter a young man who was rising in business and a pillar of the Trinity Church," Sylvester said.

Johnson and Miss Reed overcame the impasse by eloping to Chicago. They later returned to Omaha, and Johnson eventually gained the favor of his in-laws.

His early years were somewhat of a financial disaster. Frank Johnson tried and failed to corner the lemon market and it cost him dearly. He invested in the ill-fated Omaha Republican and lost \$75,000. He kept the job-printing end of the newspaper, and it became the Omaha Printing Co. (Robert Best, his grandson, is vice president.)

Johnson was influential in business and local politics for nearly 60 years, working mostly out of the public's view.

Sylvester wrote: "He said he never refused a friend who needed a loan. He was a mediator in domestic strife and is said to have saved the marriages of several prominent couples."

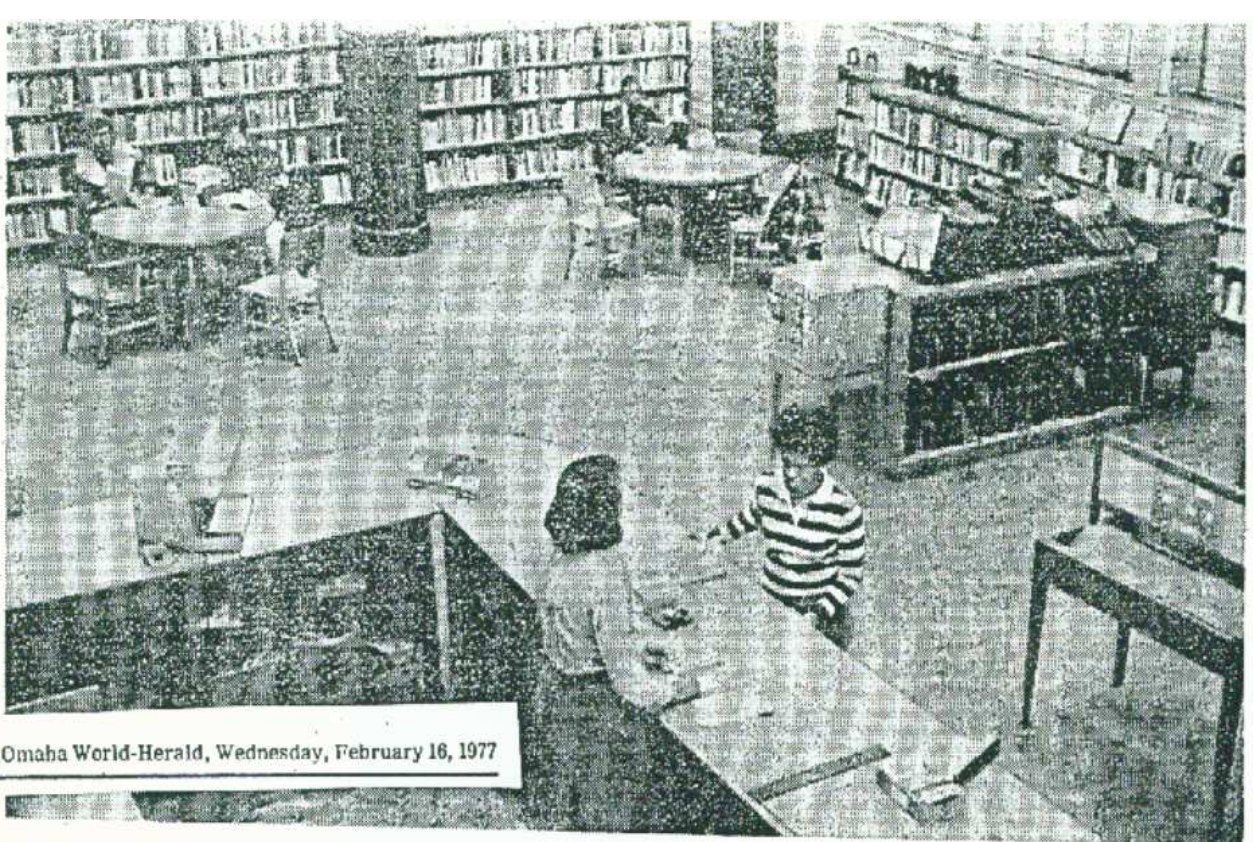
Johnson moved World-Herald writer Edward Morrow to write: "In the midst of disaster, he could sit smiling, talking to someone else."

Morrow added:

"A curious procession came to his office: A newsboy asking for money to buy a suit for confirmation; a businessman saying his men were threatening to strike and wanting to know if he could depend on police protection; a broken-down acquaintance wanting a drink; a prominent citizen who said police had picked up his son and wondered if something couldn't be done; a railroad conductor asking Johnson's influence to get him transferred to California."

At 78, Johnson died April 6, 1939.





Omaha World-Herald, Wednesday, February 16, 1977

At book checkout counter ... Mrs. Pauline Saunders, left, with library page Kim Whiteside.

—World-Herald Photos.

## Switchboard Silent at Old Downtown Library

By Eileen Wirth

For nearly three weeks, the phone has been ringing off the hook at the old downtown library.

"Everybody has been calling to ask if we're still here at Nineteenth and Harney or to ask when we are moving," said Margaret Larsen, head of home circulation.

Tuesday, the switchboard was quiet, she said. The long awaited announcement had come. The old building, which opened in 1894, is to close at 5:30 this afternoon for the move to the new W. Dale Clark Library.

An air of quiet expectancy hung over the cramped main reading room Tuesday afternoon.

A handful of noon hour patrons browsed, as usual, through the stacks and examined books in the main display cases.

"We're seeing a lot of familiar faces," said Mrs. Larsen. "But mostly we've been seeing the people who always have come, just like usual."

But all was not quite as usual, even for longtime patrons.

The periodicals were gone, along with the federal government documents and most of the Byron Reed Collection. The boys and girls department had closed. The books in the basement had been moved.

There were no books waiting



Doors close ... for last time.

to be picked up behind the checkout counter. A sign on the revolving front door announced the building's imminent closing.

A rope blocked access to one side of the wide, curving main stairway.

"Come and see us at our new

home," a cheerful librarian told visitors as she checked out books. "We'll even have nice chairs in the reading room for you to sit in."

Mrs. Larsen said most users seem eager for the new building to open but some are nostalgic about the closing of the old building.

"A lot of them have grown up with it," she said. "It's been their library home. One man said he had come to attend the last rites." Another came in and took pictures.

Despite the old building's drawbacks, it always had a comfortable feeling, she said. "It's sort of old shoeish."

Parents recently have been bringing children for a last walk on the glass floor of the stacks, she said.

Mrs. Larsen said the library staff hopes that the public will feel equally comfortable in the new building.

Some things won't change, she said.

The elderly men who have spent hours reading in the second-floor reference room still will be welcome at the new library, she said. People still will be allowed to browse freely among the books, periodicals and microfilms.

City Library Director Frank Gibson said he hopes within a week to announce an opening date for the new library.



mel:  
you won get  
the wire service

Charlie  
7-1-77

UP  
CB

North Platte, Ne.  
Telegraph  
(Cir. D. 15,987)

JUN 20 1977

UNIVERSAL Press Clipping Bureau



### Coin collection at Boys Town

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A collection of rare, uncirculated coins from the city-owned Byron Reed collection is on display at the Boys Town PhilaMatic Center, according to Melvin Stark, curator.

The display is part of collection of coins, autographs, medals, currency and other historical memorabilia willed to Omaha in 1891 by real estate pioneer Byron Reed.

The display, entitled "Coins That Might Have Been," will remain at Boys Town indefinitely, Stark said.

UP  
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The Lincoln Star  
Lincoln, NE.  
(Cir. D. 29,464)

JUN 21 1977

UNIVERSAL Press Clipping Bureau

### Reed coins shown

Omaha (AP) — A collection of rare, uncirculated coins from the city-owned Byron Reed collection is on display at the Boys Town PhilaMatic Center, according to Melvin Stark, curator.

The display, to remain at Boys Town indefinitely, is part of a collection of coins, autographs, medals, currency and other historical memorabilia willed to Omaha by real estate pioneer Byron Reed.

THE BOYSTOWNER, July 5, 1977  
B.T. NEWS

A collection of coins struck by the U.S. Mint but never released to the public pocket is on display at the Boys Town PhilaMatic Center.

Called "Coins That Might Have Been," the display includes about 150 pennies, two-cent pieces, gold dollars and other coins from Omaha's Byron Reed Collection.

Known as experimental, pattern and trial coins, all are rare, said center curator Melvin Stark.

Patterns or models of proposed coins often were distributed to members of Congress for approval, he said. Unpopular designs were discarded, and only a few remain today.

Boys Town employees are welcome to see the coins at the PhilaMatic Center. They will be housed there indefinitely.





Pattern, trial and experimental pieces of the Byron Reed Collection are examined by the Rev. Robert P. Hupp (right), director of Boys Town, and Mel Stark, curator of the PhilaMatic Center. The exhibit is on indefinite loan to the center.

## Boys Town Exhibition Focuses on Patterns

A display entitled "Coins That Might Have Been," composed of coins struck by the U.S. Mint but never released to the public, is currently on exhibit at the Boys Town, Neb., PhilaMatic Center.

Included in the display are about 150 cents, two-cent pieces, gold dollars and other coins from the Byron Reed collection. Known as experimental, pattern and trial pieces, all are rare, according to Melvin Stark, curator of the center.

One of the three or four known 1836 Gobrecht copper dollars is on display with such rarities as an 1866 copper dollar and an 1872 Harber's Amazon copper dollar.

The display is part of a collection of coins, autographs and other historical memorabilia willed to the City of Omaha in 1891 by Byron Reed, a pioneer real estate man.

Hours for viewing the exhibit are: Mon.-Sat. 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sundays and holidays 9

a.m. to 4 p.m.

In addition to the Reed exhibit, the PhilaMatic Center houses coins, paper money, stamps and other items of interest. The center is open yearround and open to the public free of charge.

Boys Town Quarterly 7/31/77

### Rare Coins at Boys Town

A collection of coins struck by the U.S. Mint but never released to the public pocket is on display at the Boys Town PhilaMatic Center.

Called "Coins That Might Have Been," the display includes about 150 pennies, two-cent pieces, gold dollars and other coins from Omaha's (Neb.) Byron Reed Collection. Known as experimental, pattern and trial coins, all are rare, said Melvin Stark, curator of the PhilaMatic Center.

The collection will remain at the center indefinitely, Mr. Stark said. Hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sundays and holidays.

The PhilaMatic Center is Boys Town's stamp and coin museum. Displayed at the center are stamps, coins, paper money and other collectibles, which are donated to Boys Town.

COIN WORLD, Wednesday, August 17, 1977 Page 76

### Coins that might have been

"Coins that might have been," an exhibition of U.S. patterns, trial and experimental pieces were exhibited at Boys Town PhilaMatic Center recently.

The 150 minor, silver and gold patterns are from the

world famous Byron Reed collection, which belongs to the center.

The exhibit will remain on display indefinitely. Hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday and holidays.



## "Coins That Might Have Been" On Display at Boys Town

"Coins That Might Have Been" are on display at the Boys Town PhilaMatic Center. This display is composed of coins struck by the U.S. Mint but never released to the public. Included in the display are about 150 one-cent pieces, one-cent pieces, gold dollars and other coins from Omaha's (Neb.) Byron Reed collection. Known as experimental, pattern and trial coins, all are rare, according to Melvin Stark, curator of the PhilaMatic Center.



The Rev. Robert P. Hupp, director of Boys Town and a coin collector, and Mel Stark examine several of the coins in the "Coins That Might Have Been" display. The display will remain at the Boys Town PhilaMatic Center indefinitely.

Patterns or models of proposed coins were often distributed to members of Congress for approval, Mr. Stark said. Those coins not approved by Congress were usually remelted with only a few remaining today. Also included in this display are coins which have one side approved by Congress and the other side not approved, and coins struck in

## Byron Reed Historical Society Receives Humanities Grant

The Byron Reed Historical Society, Inc., will receive a planning grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, according to the society's president, Robert M. Vassell. The grant proposal was prepared by members of a special committee of the society, including Vassell as principal author, and co-authors Leonard M. Owen, project director, and Gloria Owen, secretary.

This grant will fund a feasibility study to determine the most effective way to interpret the culture and heritage contained within the world-renowned Reed collection. Coins, manuscripts and structures will be selected by the committee for use in a series of slides to re-educate Omahans about the rich cultural legacy represented in the collection.

2292 THE NUMISMATIST NOVEMBER 1977 2293

odd metals such as brass and copper dollars.

One of only three or four 1835 Gobrecht copper dollars known to exist is on display. Other rarities are an 1866 copper dollar and an 1872 Barber's Amazon copper dollar. According to Mr. Stark the display at the PhilaMatic Center doesn't include all such coins in the Byron Reed collection due to space limitations.

The display is part of a collection of coins, autographs, medals, currency and other historical memorabilia willed to the city of Omaha in 1891 by Byron Reed, Omaha pioneer real estate man. "Coins That Might Have Been" will remain at the PhilaMatic Center indefinitely during hours of 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sundays and holidays.

Besides this display, the PhilaMatic Center houses coins, paper notes, stamps and other items of interest to the serious collector and general public alike. Such items include Swedish Plate Money coins which weigh several pounds each, the world's largest paper money display with over 9,000 notes, and an exhibit of obsolete paper money. The PhilaMatic Center attracts thousands of visitors each year and is open to the public free of charge.

The slide presentation will be a viable way to insure the safety of the coins, while being the closest thing to seeing the actual article. The Reed collection is currently housed in a bank vault.

Byron Reed Historical Society members believe that the slides will stimulate the citizenry of Omaha to seek a permanent home for the city-owned collection, so that present and future generations will learn more about mankind's history.

OCTOBER 1978 2049

2050 THE NUMISMATIST

## OCT 1978 The Diary

### Ten Years Ago Today — 1968

John Gronowski, former postmaster general and ambassador to Poland, was in Omaha to campaign for Hubert Humphrey, but spoke on a variety of topics. The United States' only formal contact with Red China during his years in Poland, he insisted that patience, determination and hard negotiation were needed to deal with North Vietnam. Sen. Humphrey was in South Dakota to the day.

### Twenty-five Years Ago — 1953

A New York coin expert said the Byron Reed collection in the Omaha Public Library ranked with

the top 12 or 15 collections in the country. Some of the coins were unique and were not known to exist before the collection was examined. He said the collection could have been worth up to \$1 million.

### Fifty Years Ago — 1928

Farmers and citizens of Beemer, Neb., filled the streets awaiting the outcome of an audit of the State Bank of Beemer. Investigators had already found shortages of over \$100,000. Officials had applied to Omaha and Lincoln for funds to square the deficiencies. A warrant was issued, charging Paul Wupper, Beemer mayor and bank president, with embezzlement.

## 3 Structures Added to Historic Register

Lincoln (UPI) — The Nebraska Historical Society Wednesday announced that the old Omaha Public Library, the H.P. Sutton House in McCook and the Indian Industrial School in Genoa have been entered in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Omaha library at 19th and Harney Streets was built in 1881-84. The Renaissance revival-style building was designed by Thomas Kimball of Walker &

and academic training to students from 19 tribes and reservations. It was one of the first non-reservation boarding schools of the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The National Register is the nation's list of cultural resources worthy of preservation, said Marvin Kivett, director of the state society.

Omaha World-Herald, Friday, June 9, 1978



# Byron Reed patterns, trials appear in Boys Town exhibit

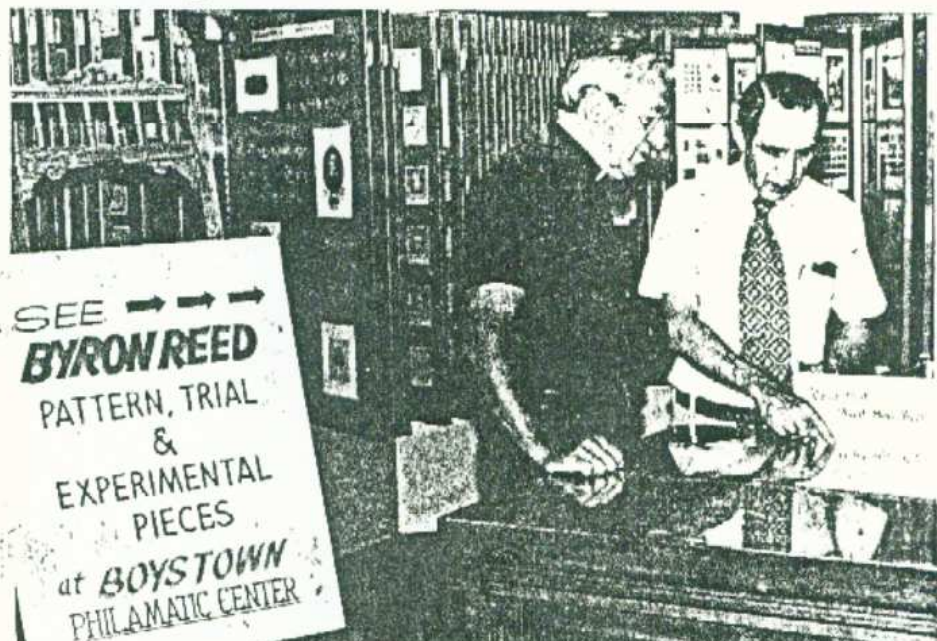
"Coins That Might Have Been," showcasing selected coins from the Byron Reed Collection of United States pattern and trial pieces, is the featured display at the Boys Town PhilaMatic Center, Boys Town, Neb.

Included in the exhibit are some 150 cents, two-cent pieces, gold dollars, and other examples of U.S. coins struck by the Mint but never released to circulation, plus coins which had one side approved by Congress but not the other, and coins struck in odd metals, such as an 1836 Gobrecht copper dollar, and an 1872 Barber Amazon copper dollar.

The trial coins are part of a collection of coins, medals, currency, and other historical items willed to the city of Omaha in 1891 by real estate pioneer Byron Reed. The collection is rated one of the finest of its kind in the country, according to PhilaMatic Center curator Melvin Stark.

The PhilaMatic Center had its origin in the late 1940's when the late Dwight O. Barrett, of Tulsa, donated his extensive collection of stamps, currency, and related items to Father Edward J. Flanagan's Boys Town.

Father Flanagan asked Barrett, a retired mechanical engineer, to design a suitable museum to house the collection, and through the efforts of Barrett and the donations of Mrs. John R. McCarl, who contributed funds in honor of her late husband, the PhilaMatic



Rev. Robert P. Hupp (L), director of Boys Town and an avid coin collector, and curator Melvin Stark take a look at several of the coins in the Byron Reed collection, now on display at the Boys Town PhilaMatic Center.

Center became a reality on July 1, 1951.

Barrett served as curator of the museum until 1959, and was curator emeritus until his death in 1964. His assistant, Wren L. Culkin, headed the facility from 1959 until 1972, when he gave way to the present curator.

Since the beginning, the museum has grown from 200 frames of coins, currency, stamps, and related material, to nearly 650 frames, thanks to donations from many individuals and institutions. Among its

outstanding displays of numismatic and philatelic as well as general interest are a 600 pound ball of stamps (featured in Ripley's "Believe It Or Not"), the "world's largest" paper money display featuring more than 9,000 notes, Swedish plate money coins which weigh several pounds each, the only existing block of four Uniontown, Ala., Confederate stamps, a display of obsolete paper money in which visitors are invited to find notes from their home town, a stamp with a \$50,000 denomination, and the

Oscar awarded to Spencer Tracy for his portrayal of Father Flanagan in the 1938 film "Boys Town."

Nearly one million visitors have passed through the PhilaMatic Center, open year-round from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sundays and holidays. Group tours are available by calling (402) 498-1360.

"Coins That Might Have Been" will be on display for an indefinite period, according to curator Stark.

## Veys: New Home Needed For Byron Reed Collection

Like many city officials before him, Mayor Veys hopes one day that a "proper, secure place" can be found to display the Byron Reed collection of rare books, autographs, newspapers and coins.

The mayor and Councilman Richard Takechi visited the W. Dale Clark Library this week to check on the more than 1,800 books and 800 autographs in the collection donated to the city in 1891 by pioneer real estate man Byron Reed.

Omaha World Herald, 10/20/77 Thurs

"It would take a football field" to display all the items properly, Veys said at his Wednesday press conference.

The coins, valued at \$3 million, have been stored in a bank vault since 1966, after there were several efforts to steal them from the old main library.

The rest of the collection now is in a locked file case in the new library's local history department.



# Boys Town PhilaMatic Center observes 25th anniversary

imately 500 notes and includes pieces printed by Benjamin Franklin and notes printed from plates engraved by Paul Revere. Blue paper varieties and a number of uncut sheets are also displayed.

Another part of the Boys Town Bicentennial exhibit features autographs of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Of the 56 patriots who signed the Declaration, signatures of 32 of the signers are on display.

Documents bearing the signatures of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams and John Hancock are also shown. A letter signed by George Washington is included in this display.

The Boys Town Philamatic Center was opened in July, 1951, and is chiefly comprised of the extensive stamp and coin holdings donated to Boys Town by Dwight A. Barrett, an Omaha philatelist.

The display is sponsored jointly by the center and the Omaha-Douglas County Bicentennial Commission. The public is invited.

Boys Town, Neb., PhilaMatic Center celebrated its 25th anniversary on July 1 with an open house.

Guests attending the event had the opportunity to view the nearly 5,000 coins, tokens and medals exhibited by the center. Also displayed were nearly 9,000 pieces of paper money, believed by PhilaMatic Center curator Mel Stark to be the largest such exhibit in the world.

Among these notes are a Chinese Imperial Bank note used 100 years before the discovery of America, a large U.S. Fractional Currency collection, notes issued

by the United Colonies in denominations of two-thirds and one-sixth of a dollar, and a complete collection of Confederate States of America issues.

In commemoration of the nation's Bicentennial, the PhilaMatic Center featured a special display which featured American Colonial coins and medals, and 500 notes, many of which had been printed by Benjamin Franklin. Among the latter were pieces carrying the signatures of 32 of the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence.

In addition to the exhibits of

coins and paper money, visitors viewed collections of stamps, documents, paintings, pre-Columbian artifacts and the "Oscar" trophy won by actor Spencer Tracy for his part in the movie, "Boys Town."

The PhilaMatic Center was formed July 1, 1951, when Dwight O. Barrett, a retired mechanical engineer from Tulsa, Okla., presented to Boys Town 200 frames of stamps and coins which he had collected.

The collection has grown in the last 25 years to 650 frames of

★ Please turn to page 9

## Center marks anniversary

### FROM PAGE 1

coins, stamps and other pieces, acquired through donations from private individuals to the center.

The special exhibit of Colonial material was loaned for the event by the city of Omaha, from the famed Byron Reed collection, and the open house represented the first time in 10 years that this

material had been displayed publicly.

Stark estimates that more than a million visitors have seen the displays in the PhilaMatic Center in the last quarter century. "And we'll continue to admit visitors free of charge 361½ days a year for many, many more years," he said.



Confederate States note specialist Grover Criswell (L.), vice president and governor of the American Numismatic Association, admires a note pointed out to him by PhilaMatic Center curator Mel Stark during July 1 open house at the center, held to commemorate its 25th anniversary.



# News of Note

People, Places and Events of Lasting Hobby Interest

•One of the nation's great coin collections will remain in a bank vault for the foreseeable future, but slides of the individual rarities may be available for public viewing by next spring. That's the word from Omaha, Neb., city councilman Richard Takechi, who is on the board of the Byron Reed Historical Association, owner of the \$3 million Byron Reed Numismatic Collection.

During a recent visit to Omaha by Grover C. Criswell, president of the American Numismatic Association, Takechi, other city officials and area coin collectors wanted to display some of the Reed Collection coins for the visiting ANA executive. Trouble was, nobody could open the bank vault where the collection is kept. As a result, a locksmith was called, who had to drill through the vault door to open it.

Takechi admitted the incident was embarrassing, but the coins are behind a double-combination lock. One combination is known only to the association, and the other is known only to Takechi. The city councillor said he had committed the combination to memory, but couldn't remember it when asked to open the vault. Thus, the need for a locksmith.

The collection itself was willed to the city in 1892 upon the death of Reed, a pioneer Omaha real estate man. It was kept in the old public library until 1966, when two burglary attempts prompted the city to move it to a bank vault.

Takechi and other city officials said they would like to put the collection on public display, but security is the problem. "It's a security nightmare," said Omaha mayor Veys. However, the historical association, which oversees the collection has received a \$2,500 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to prepare a slide show on the collection. Officials hope that will increase interest and lead to donations for a building to house it.

"We're hoping the slide show can be ready by spring," Takechi said. If they can get the vault door open to photograph the coins!

**Reed Coin Grant**  
The Byron Reed Historical Society has received a \$2,500 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to prepare a slide show on the city-owned Reed coin collection. A World-Herald article last week said the grant was from the National Endowment for the Arts.  
**Omaha World-Herald**  
**Nebraska Edition**  
November 15, 1978

## Reed Coins So Secure A Locksmith Needed

By Michael Kelly

World-Herald Staff Writer

The City of Omaha's Byron Reed coin collection is secure.

It is so secure that it took a locksmith to drill open the vault where the collection is kept.

Why was that necessary?

"I don't think the bank would appreciate us talking about security procedures," City Councilman Richard Takechi said.

"Dick (Takechi) apparently just couldn't remember the combination," Mayor Veys said.

Another official said something might have been wrong with the lock.

The collection was willed to the city in 1892 upon the death of Reed, pioneer Omaha real estate man.

It is said to be worth \$3 million or more, and Omaha coin dealer Al Moore said it is one of the best in the nation.

The coins were held in the old public library until 1966. Two burglary attempts caused the city to move the collection to a bank vault.

Officials gathered in the U.S. National Bank one day this week to look at the coins and have a picture taken.

Grover Criswell, Fort McCoy, Fla., president of the American Numismatic Association, was in Omaha, and some local coin collectors wanted his picture taken with the mayor, holding some of the Reed coins.

### Not Written Down

The coins are behind a double-combination lock. One combination is known only to the Byron Reed Historical Association, and the other is known only to Takechi, the City Council's representative to the historical association.

An aide to the mayor said that Takechi indicated that he had committed the combination to memory, and did not have it written down.

The representative of the historical association successfully worked his combination, but Takechi could not get his to open it.

"I went to lunch," Veys said.

Meanwhile, different sequences of numbers were tried on the lock. Finally, a locksmith was called to drill it open, and Veys was called back after lunch for a picture.

Omaha World-Herald  
Friday, November 16, 1978



Takechi

Takechi said it should not be publicly known, for security reasons, that an individual such as himself has one of the combinations.

When asked what had happened at the vault, he replied "I'm not going to tell you. If this comes out, I'm thinking of resigning (as representative of the historical association)."

The Reed collection, which includes numerous books and documents as well as coins, remains closed to the public.

### 'Security Nightmare'

Takechi and others have said they would like to open it for public view, but that security is the problem.

"It's a security nightmare," Veys said.

The Reed historical group has received a \$2,500 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to prepare a slide show of the collection, and officials hope that will increase interest and lead to donations for a building to house it.

"We're hoping the slide show can be ready by spring," Takechi said.

The Omaha Library Board 1972 recommended that the collection be sold to raise funds for a new main library, but the City Council voted unanimously against the sale. The library eventually was built.

"It's a shame it can't be shown to the public," said Moore, treasurer of the historical association.



# Omaha's Reed collection still hidden away

(The city of Omaha, Neb., possesses one of the foremost collections of U.S. medieval and ancient coins in this country, bequeathed to it in 1884 by realtor Byron Reed. The collection at present is kept under wraps because of inadequate facilities for displaying it, and other reasons, according to this special report by American Numismatic Association President Grover C. Criswell.)

By Grover C. Criswell

It had been some 23 years since I had the pleasure of viewing a large part of the famous Byron Reed collection of coins in Omaha, Neb. Indeed, it was the 1955 American Numismatic Association convention that had brought me to the

city at the time. The collection, or at least a sizeable part of it, was then on display in the old Library Building and special attention was given to the exhibit as a part of the convention's "things to see in the area" program.

By November, 1973, return at the behest of the Byron Reed Historical Society, Inc. was both educational and very much more professional.

Having been a professional numismatist for about nine years in 1955, I was greatly impressed with such things as the 1894 dollar, the 1829 \$5 gold pieces with both Large and Small Letters, the 1875 and 1876 \$3 gold pieces in Proof, 1796 choice condition half cent, half dollar, dollar and \$2 1/2 gold pieces just to mention a few.

The 1853-O half dollar with No Arrows as well as some of the 350 pattern coins in the collection were also of considerable interest in the U.S. section, even though their value then was minuscule in comparison to today.

I am still impressed by rare individual pieces but at today's market prices, one can't help but also be impressed by common.

Assistant Attorney General Alan Katz argued that the case involved only one question: Which nation the United States

gold of almost every year from 1860 to 1891, and fabulous foreign pieces of the ancient and medieval periods selling for even more than the U.S. gold. Such is now the case, and only small parts of the fantastic collection of ancient, medieval, medals, foreign and other numismatics has ever been exhibited.

Virtually nothing was shown of the fantastic collection of autographs, or the probably unique collection of official Trans-Mississippi items (this was saved by the committee, an example of each official piece).

The total value of all the above highly desirable collectibles was probably \$500,000 to \$600,000 in 1955 and even though it had been given to the city in 1891 by the will of the pioneer realtor whose name it bears, no real effort has ever been made by the city to make it available for display in a safe, secure and/or complete manner. A burglary some few years after I saw it in 1955 resulted in the collection being chunked into lock-boxes and stored unmajestically for the last 18 years.

In 1972 the city considered

changed its mind. Few libraries or cities have been privileged to own or exhibit quality museum material such as the numismatic items included in this collection. This is the only one, to my knowledge, that has it and doesn't exhibit it.

It's unathomable to think that such fantastic material as this has been kept under wraps and away from the searching eyes of not only the citizens, both youth and old of the city, but also scholars, researchers and tourists for almost 20 years. Apparently, all because of the stubborn opposition to anything but "books" of

one bureaucratic appointee, who chooses not to recognize as of educational or historical value that which is, and so stupendously so!

## Up in smoke

When the U.S. Steamer Ruth was destroyed by a raging inferno set by Confederate saboteurs in 1863, a total of \$2,600,000 in new U.S. currency was turned into ashes during the conflagration. Only two small fragments of the currency were ever recovered from the smoldering bulk, despite an intensive search for the money.

## A Coin World Reader service

## Eleven-Month Mint Report

	1978	1977
Cents	9,063,595,400	7,530,113,242
Nickels	640,337,400	814,479,506
Dimes	884,595,400	1,095,235,546
Quarters	741,385,400	619,977,897
Halves	28,101,400	71,441,506
Cupro-Nickel Dollars	51,722,000	42,125,000
Bicentennial 40% Silver Unc. Sets	22,131	63,125
Bicentennial 40% Silver Proof Sets	45,214	106,537
Regular Proof Sets	2,676,369	2,727,262

Figures above represent the production of the nation's Mints for the months of January through November, 1978. The column at the right shows the production one year earlier. Production figures for individual minting facilities are not available from the Mint until the end of each calendar year. Figures on manufacture for 1978 and 1977 for each month may be found on page 38 of the January 17 issue of



## Let public see Reed collection

For 13 years, this week's special report beginning on Page 1 points out, the Byron Reed coin collection has been locked up in a bank vault, out of sight and inaccessible to the citizens of Omaha.

And as late as 1974, the manuscript portion of the Reed collection slowly disintegrated in a room with insufficient temperature and humidity control and inadequate supervision against abuse or theft, Sun articles of that period show.

Caring for collections so valuable, with individual artifacts of an irreplaceable variety, can be a costly process, and we sympathize with city officials who've tried to cope with such headaches.

On the other hand, it seems to us that 13 years is more than enough time to have made the permanent public displaying of these artifacts, representing Omaha's heritage, a high priority. Instead, we find that successive city administrations, including the current one, have failed to recognize the value that such a collection can have, both culturally and economically.

Clearly, it is time for Mayor Al Veys to act. It is probably unfeasible to spend large sums of public money on the project at present, but we would suggest getting the prime movers of our community involved.

When the mayor sensed the city's personnel system needed drastic overhauling, he called on personnel managers of the large private companies of Omaha to lend their expertise to the city, and emerged with a report valuable in its insight.

We suggest that he use a similar approach, calling on the "prime movers" of our community to assemble and study various proposals for putting the Reed collection (coins, medals, currency, books, manuscripts and documents) into a permanent center of its own where the public can enjoy it.

Means of privately financing the project might be studied, along with the possibility of garnering federal and foundation grants.

The ultimate result, we believe, would be a viable proposal that, when acted upon, would benefit Omaha culturally and economically.

### By Dave Sink

Omahans, who have spent millions of dollars to develop the Joslyn Art Museum, the Henry Doorly Zoo, the Orpheum Theater and other cultural centers, may be forfeiting another potentially lucrative attraction by literally keeping it in the dark, say members of The Byron Reed Historical Society.

They refer to the Byron Reed coin collection, almost sold by the city for \$1 million in 1973. Since 1966, when the collection was removed from the old Main Branch Library, 18th and Harney streets, in the wake of two unsuccessful robbery attempts, the coins have been sequestered in a downtown bank vault.

Thought by some to be worth \$1.5 million in 1973, the collection is now conservatively valued from \$3.5 million to \$4 million, and the president of the American Numismatic Association (ANA), Grover C. Criswell, says he believes they might be worth even more.

Another part of the Reed collection, a vast number of documents, letters and manuscripts written by world-famous personages, has now been estimated by an expert in the field to be worth in excess of \$1 million, possibly much more.

**ROBERT VASELL**, vice president of the Byron Reed Historical Society (custodians of the collection), says a new, secure building to display all Reed arti-

facts is needed for the central business district.

Such a center, he says, would draw coin collectors and scholars from all over the nation to view the coins and study important historical documents. Another member of the society, Leonard Owen, says the establishment of a center could entice the ANA to hold its national convention in Omaha.

Based on recent conventions, says Owen, Omaha could expect 25,000 collectors to visit the city over the course of a week. Such a happening would, in itself, pay for the cost of establishing the center, he says.

ANA's Criswell, who says he's been an admirer of (Continued on Page 16-A)



The prize of the Reed collection is the Rollis Royce of collectible U.S. coins, this 1904 silver dollar. Recently, another 1804 dollar brought \$250,000 at auction.

# Byron Reed collection sits in dark



# Byron Reed collection in the dark

(Continued from Page 1-A)

the Reed collection since 1955, when he viewed it during an Omaha convention, agrees with Owen that ANA might be attracted to hold a convention in Omaha if the Reed collection could be placed on permanent display. That's if Omaha could come up with enough hotel rooms to accommodate thousands of collectors, he says.

Criswell says the existence of the Reed collection very nearly succeeded in landing the ANA national headquarters in Omaha during the 1960s. Negotiations between Joslyn and ANA were in progress to establish an office building and museum north of the art museum, but broke down over a lack of off-street parking, he says.

**EVEN UP TO EIGHT** years ago, says Criswell, he tried to rekindle interest in Omaha as a national ANA headquarters, but was stymied by the city's unwillingness to commit itself to ANA custody of the Reed collection. Now the national headquarters is established in Colorado Springs, Colo., and is unlikely to be moved, says Criswell.

So far, admits Vassell, any talk about a cultural center to house Reed artifacts is only that — talk. The historical society — composed of Vassell, President Al Moore, Leonard and Gloria Owen, Boys Town Philanthropic Center Director Mel Stark and attorney Jerome P. Grossman — are basically collectors, not prime movers, he says. Vassell says the city's business leaders would have to spearhead such a project.

The historical society's role has been to catalogue the large collection of coins and medals, a job that is almost completed, says Owen. Additionally, the society has seen to it that all coins have been placed in individual holders to preserve them. Years ago many of the coins were simply tossed into cigar boxes, he says.

For its part, the city has made absolutely no progress since 1966 in finding a publically accessible home for the collection, interviews with Mayor Al Veys and City Councilman Richard Takechi (liaison between the city and the historical society) indicate.

**VEYS SAYS HE DID** hold conversations with Northwestern Bell Telephone Co. officials about displaying small parts of the collection inside an office building. Nothing has come of it yet, he says.

And Takechi says he knows of no interest expressed by any Omaha group in housing the collection or building a structure to hold it. Both Veys and Takechi admit that the finding of a home for the collection hasn't been a high priority.

As Veys sees it, the cost of providing security for a public viewing of the collection, which includes a prize \$250,000 1804 silver dollar, is prohibitive. Instead, the city spends \$100 per year on vault rental and about \$4,000 to pay insurance while the coins remain out of sight.

The city has for 13 years been in violation of the will that brought it this nest egg. The wealthy realtor and one-time city official, Byron Reed, donated his coins, medals, currency, books and manuscripts, along with land on which a library could be built, upon his death in 1891. The gift was made on the condition that a building be constructed to house the collection. The will stated that "said library and coin collection shall be placed in said building and forever thereafter be used and displayed for the benefit of the public."

Reed stipulated that the city's failure to meet the conditions would result in forfeiture of the collection to his heirs. City officials, cognizant of their violation, paid remaining Reed heirs \$50,000 in 1973 and 1974 to waive any claim to the fortune.

**THE HIGH COST OF** security for the valuables has proved a stumbling block to the city, a fact that historical society President Al Moore understands. Moore estimates the cost of an appropriate building with an adequate electronic security system at \$1 million.

"We realize that kind of money isn't going to be coming from the taxpayers," he says. "They have enough problems. If we could find an 'angel', maybe we could get somewhere."

The society was able to obtain a grant of less than \$2,000 to put together a slide presentation chronicling the life of Reed and some outstanding specimens in the collection. The grant, from the National Endowment for the Humanities, was supplemented by funds contributed by local coin clubs.

Besides the famous silver dollar, the presentation makes mention of a large collection of gold coins, ancient pieces and early currency, including the only known existing bank note issued by the Bank of Florence, Nebraska's oldest bank.

Manuscripts and documents contributed by Reed were authored by what sounds like a Who's Who of historical figures: Composers like Strauss and Mendelssohn, literary figures such as Dickens, Byron, Clemens. Letters from the abolitionist John Brown are contained there. So are documents prepared by George Washington, explorer William Clark, the Napoleons.

**GENE DEGRUSON**, special collections librarian at Pittsburgh State University in Pittsburgh, Kan., came to Omaha last fall to quickly view some of the documents.

DeGruson says he was startled by the extent and value of the documents. Several, including a five-page report by Gen. George Washington to the Continental Congress on the progress of the Revolutionary War, are unknown to scholars and of high value he says. It is DeGruson who estimates the value of the manuscripts at in excess of \$1 million.

Members of the historical society hope to generate interest for their dream, the Reed Center, by showing the slide presentation to civic groups.

But as to the future of the collection, the society's members admit they are like the locked up coins — in



# Settlement Is Possible On Old City Library

## Renovation Proposal For Old Library Snags

By Michael Kelly

World-Herald Staff Writer

Plans to renovate the old downtown library are on the shelf because of a legal question: Who owns the land?

The heirs of Byron Reed have staked a claim.

"The city expressly agreed in an ordinance (in 1891) that it would forever use the premises for a public library," said Michael Schleich, attorney for the Reed heirs.

According to the will of pioneer Omaha real estate man Byron Reed, who bequeathed it to the city, the land returns to his heirs if it is not used for that purpose, Schleich said.

City Attorney Herbert Fittle said, however, the law limits such "reverter" agreements to 30 years, and that limit long ago expired. So the city owns the land under the old library, he said.

### Maybe to Court

The dispute might go to court. Or, the two sides might try to work out a financial settlement.

"I'm writing the city a letter to ask them what they intend to do about it," Schleich said. "The next step is up to them."

The books were moved out of the old library at 19th and Harney Streets two years ago, when the W. Dale Clark Library opened at 14th and Farnam Streets.

Proposals were sought for a new use of the old library, and a committee of city officials selected one by a subsidiary of the N.P. Dodge Co. Dodge Downtown Development Inc. will be recommended to the City Council for a contract to renovate the library for offices.

Dodge agrees to buy the building for \$52,300 and to spend \$1.65 million on renovation.

### Parking at Back

A two-story parking structure

for 49 cars would be built on the back of the library. The interior focal point would be an atrium extending from the basement to the roof, with an existing skylight providing light.

Two glass-enclosed elevators and a spiral stairway would be at the atrium's edge.

At one time, the plan was for work to start this month, but the legal problem has delayed the project.

Milton Abrahams, attorney for Dodge Development, has written the City Legal Department that Dodge will not be in a position to arrange financing until the legal question is settled.

In an earlier letter, attorney Schleich told city officials that if they attempt to go through with the sale, "We will take the appropriate legal action to enforce our clients' right to the land."

### Undecided

He said in an interview that the heirs could seek an injunction and ask for a court determination of who owns the land.

Schleich said the 30-year limit on "reverter" clauses doesn't apply to the library land.

"There is no reverter clause in the will of Byron Reed. It was a gift upon a condition," he said.

City Hall sources say it is possible that the city will offer to settle with the heirs for \$50,000. Fittle said no formal settlement offer has been made.

"I'm sure the land is worth in excess of that," Schleich said.

About six years ago, the city paid the heirs \$50,000 as a settlement for the Byron Reed coin collection, also left to the city in Reed's will.

The city was thinking about selling the collection, which had an estimated value of \$1 million. It did not sell and recent estimates are that it is worth \$3 million.

At the time of the settlement on the coins, the heirs who signed the agreement were Mrs. R. Russell Best, Edna R. Ayers, Harry G. Montgomery Jr., Reed Montgomery and Thomas R. Norris.

City Hall might pay \$50,000 to the heirs of Byron Reed so the old public library can be renovated for offices.

City Attorney Herbert Fittle said Tuesday that he might recommend that the City Council approve the settlement to avoid a lawsuit that would take two years.

"The only reason we would recommend settling is the time factor, to get this project going," Fittle said.

Attorneys for the city and the heirs have been negotiating for months. Byron Reed bequeathed the property at 19th and Harney Streets to the city.

His heirs say that the will and an 1891 city ordinance make it clear that the land would forever be used for a public library, or that the land would revert to the ownership of the heirs.

The city says such "reverter" agreements expire after 30 years.

Other legal theories have been bounced back and forth.

Could the city win in court?

"It's not a hands-down case but we think we have a decent legal position," Fittle said. Atorneys for the heirs disagree.

Last fall, a City Hall committee selected Dodge Downtown Development, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of the N.P. Dodge Co., as the firm to renovate the old library.

The building, designated as a city historical landmark, has been mostly vacant since the W. Dale Clark public library opened two years ago.

The Dodge firm would buy the building for \$52,300 and spend \$1.65 million on renovation. A two-story parking garage for 49 cars would be built on the back of the library, and the interior would have an atrium from the basement to the roof, topped by a skylight.

WORLD HERALD  
1-23-79



## Tight Cash Delays Library Transfer

10-17-79 WORLD HERALD

The tight money market has caused a delay in the city transfer of the old public library's title to a developer.

The City Council was scheduled Tuesday to vote on the proposal to sell the historic building at 19th and Harney Streets to Dodge Downtown Development Inc., a wholly-owned subsidiary of the N.P. Dodge Co.

There was no opposition from the council to the proposal that would sell the building to the Dodge company for \$52,300 on the condition the company preserve the exterior and spend at least \$1.2 million to remodel the interior.

The Dodge company plans to spend close to \$2 million. But another condition for transfer of the building is that the company show that it has secured necessary financing.

Charles Peters, senior vice president for N.P. Dodge, said current economic conditions have made obtaining the money from a lending institution difficult. Peters asked the council for a three-week delay to try and complete the financing arrangements.

"We are still encouraged," Peters said. "We want to emphasize that we still plan to carry out the plans."

If financing can't be arranged, the city will keep the building.

City attorneys have reached an agreement with the heirs of Byron Reed, who bequeathed the property to the city. The

heirs said the will and an 1891 ordinance made it clear that the land must forever be used as a library or revert to ownership of the heirs.

The heirs have agreed to accept \$50,000 to let the city have the property for any purpose. The vote on whether to pay that \$50,000 also was postponed three weeks.

## New site proposed for Byron Reed collection

A member of the Metropolitan Technical Community College Board of Governors says he's interested in housing the city's Byron Reed coin and manuscript collection on Metro Tech's South Omaha campus, 29th and Q streets.

But Omaha Mayor Al Vey, asked about the idea, says he believes the South Omaha location would be a

to the board in November, says he became concerned about the lack of public access to the \$5 million collection after reading a Sun Newspaper special report in the April 19 edition.

Larsen believes Metro Tech officials should seek out federal grants to build a secure structure for the collection, and he says he'll make the suggestion

been assured that the idea will be assigned to a committee for study.

The board member envisions a numismatic center being established. Courses on coin collecting could be offered there, and portions of the collection could be on permanent display, he says, Larsen says the manuscripts should also be placed there, because "the Reed collection has to be

Larsen says he's not sure what such a project would cost. Some other sources have estimated the cost of building such a center at about \$1 million.

Larsen says he hasn't yet discussed the idea with city officials, but did talk to Robert Vassell, vice president of the Byron Reed Historical Society and one of the custodians of the collection.

Sun, says he's pleased that a public official is taking interest in finding a home for the collection, but hopes Larsen "will follow proper channels. No idea is feasible without the city's blessing. Those are the facts of life."

Vey, informed of Larsen's proposal, says he doesn't believe that the 29th and Q streets site is

such a collection.

"Were it placed at Joslyn, I'd say excellent, and UNO would be good, while a downtown office building would also be good. But the South Omaha site wouldn't. We'd have coin collectors driving through the stockyards looking for the collection. No, even as a South Omaha, I'd have to say the collection should be in the core area of the



WORLD HERALD  
3-30-79

## Old Library Could Gain New Glitter

By Larry King

World-Herald Staff Writer

Details for transfer of the old public library building to a private developer have been completed, city officials said Wednesday.

The City Council will vote in three weeks whether to approve a contract with Dodge Downtown Development Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of the N.P. Dodge Co.

The council has been waiting for the City Law Department to settle with the heirs of Byron Reed, who bequeathed the property at 19th and Harney Streets to the city. The heirs said the will and an 1891 city ordinance make it clear that the land would forever be used for a public library, or that the land would revert to ownership of the heirs.

City Attorney Herb Fittle said the city and the heirs have agreed to a \$50,000 out-of-court settlement with the heirs relinquishing all claims to the building.

Charles Peters, senior vice president for the N.P. Dodge Co., said close to \$2 million worth of work will be done to refurbish the building into offices.

The exterior will be preserved, Peters said.

Most offices probably will be law firms, he said.

Peters said the interior will be stripped and rebuilt. There will be an atrium running between floors to the roof, topped by a skylight, he said.

There will be two exposed glass elevators. All new plumbing and heating will be installed.

According to the agreement the council will be asked to approve, Dodge Downtown Development will pay the city \$52,300 for the building, provided it makes more than \$1.2 million in improvements.

2-J

Sunday World-Herald, March 9, 1980



Byron Reed coins . . . checked, from left, by Grossman, Stark and Takechi.

## City's Byron Reed Coins

# 'Lost Collection' Seen by Few

By Michael Kelly

World-Herald Staff Writer

By all accounts, it is one of the great coin and autograph collections in the United States.

It is unique in being owned by the citizens of a city. But almost no one has seen it for years.

For the last 15, the coins have been in a bank vault, seemingly a paradox — too good to be hidden, but too good to be displayed. They are so valuable that security costs would be too high, officials say.

To coin a phrase, it is the Lost Collection of Omaha — the Byron Reed collection.

"To think that it just lies there without being seen," said Omaha attorney Jerome Grossman. "It's like taking the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and putting them in a drawer."



World-Herald

Gregorian chant book from 15th century . . . examined by Takechi.



## One of Top 5

Grossman is one of a handful of people who have seen the coins in recent years. Since 1973, he and other members of the Byron Reed Historical Society have been cataloging the collection and are almost finished.

"It's one of the foremost American collections," said Melvin Stark, retired curator of the Boys Town philatelic center. "Probably one of the top five."

The more than 8,000 coins and medals are insured by the city for \$3.5 million (the annual premium is \$7,500). The actual value is unknown and the cataloguers won't make their estimate public.

It would expose the bank to



Silver dollar ... worth more than \$200,000.

potential security problems, they say.

Rising prices of silver and gold have increased the value of the collection, but Stark said its greater value is based on the rarity of the coins.

Reed, the pioneer Omaha real estate man whose company lives on, penned his will on June 2, 1891. His collection would go to the citizens of Omaha "forever thereafter to be used and displayed for the benefit of the public."

## Now in Vault

Two days later, he died. Reed lies in a hillside grave at the old Prospect Hill Cemetery, 33rd and Parker Streets, his last wishes unfulfilled in recent years. For nearly 75 years, the collection was at the old library at 19th and Harney Streets. After two burglary attempts in 1963 and 1965, the collection was locked in a vault.

City Councilman Richard Takechi, the council's link with

the Reed society, said he believes the collection will be open to the public someday. But no plans exist to do so soon.

"Now that people are more interested in historical preservation," Takechi said, "there may be more interest in giving us the kind of support we need."

Seven years ago, the mayor and council appeared ready to sell the collection for \$1 million. Grossman, Stark and others protested, and the collection was saved.

## 'Too Cheap'

"For one thing," Grossman said, "the \$1 million they wanted to sell it for was too cheap. And that isn't what it was left to the City of Omaha for. It's here to look at."

The cataloguing, which began shortly thereafter, has taken hundreds of hours of volunteer work. Some of the coins had been in cigar boxes.

The star of the collection is the 1804 silver dollar, one of 15 known to exist. Grossman estimated it alone is worth \$200,000 to \$250,000.

Among others: a 1852 shilling, said to be the first type of coin struck in the colonies; an 1829 gold piece; a 1793 cent; U.S. mint errors called "bottlecap coins" because of their shape.

The collection also includes many ancient and medieval coins, some of which have been difficult to identify.

## Autographs, Too

Reed's books, pamphlets and autograph collection are in a room at the W. Dale Clark Public Library.

Among the signatures:

— George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and all the other U.S. presidents to the time of Reed's death; Thomas Jefferson, John Hancock and most of the other signers of the Declaration of Independence.

— Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Haydn and Berlioz.

— Louis XIV, Henry VIII, Napoleon Bonaparte, and many queens and kings.

— Abner Doubleday, the inventor of baseball, and numerous other officers in the Civil War, such as Robert E. Lee and Jefferson

Davis. Revolutionary War officers are represented, too.

— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), Charles Dickens, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Washington Irving, Harriet Beecher Stowe, John Jacob Astor, John J. Audubon, John Brown, Merriweather Lewis, Noah Webster and Robert Burns.

Thomas Heenan, head of the library's history department, said a large display case is on order and that some of the documents might be displayed.

The most striking artifact in the Reed documents is a 15-by-26-inch Gregorian chant book dating from the 15th century. It weighs about 20 pounds, its pages are of lambskin or goatskin, and its cover is partly metal.

"You can see that it's been through some wars," Heenan said.

The story is that it was stolen from the cathedral at Milan between 1618 and 1648 and later was taken to New York. Reed got it at an auction.

## Display Sites

The Reed Society has looked for places to display the collection. The American Numismatic Association was thinking of moving its headquarters here



Bottlecap ... mint error.

with a permanent Reed coin display, but that fell through.

The city-owned Union Station was considered but rejected because it has "too many doors and too many windows," according to one official. The former "cupcake" bank at 19th and Dodge Streets, now the

Arch 9, 1980



# Omaha seeks way to display Reed collection

Efforts have been revived in Omaha to remove the famous Byron Reed coin collection from a darkened vault in downtown Omaha and make it available for public display.

Mayor Mike Boyle said on April 12 that he has appointed a six-man committee to deter-

mine a way to display and secure what is said to be the nation's second most valuable coin collection, for which they hope to find a new home within a year.

It was displayed at the old city library at 19th and Harney Streets for 75 years; but the de-

cision was made to place it in a vault following burglary at-

tempts in 1963 and 1965.

The collection includes such rarities as the "finest known" 1804 dollar, the rare 1875 \$3 gold piece, and a number of rare Pioneer gold pieces, in-

cluding a Mormon set, the rare Dubosq \$5 and the Pike's Peak \$5 and \$10 gold pieces.

It includes a total of 6,369 coins, 1,200 medals, 615 Confederate notes and 2,136 other bank notes, together with 832 autographs, 3,243 pamphlets and 1,836 books, and is second only to the national numismatic collection at the Smithsonian Institution.

The Byron Reed collection was offered unsuccessfully as an inducement to the American Numismatic Association to establish its home and headquarters in Omaha, on a \$1-a-year rental basis in 1967, with the noted Omaha numismatist Aubrey Beebe spearheading this effort.

In 1972, Omaha's City Council entertained a proposal to dispose of the collection by public auction, to help finance the erection of a new \$6-million public library.

The proposal was made originally by a trio of Midwestern coin dealers — Lyn F. Knight of Cherokee, Iowa; Fred Sweetney of Kansas City, Mo.; and Gary Sturtridge, Kansas City, Kans., who offered to purchase the collection for a "reasonable price" and auction it under their own auspices.

The Omaha City Council subsequently considered sponsoring its own auction.

A proposal was made to make a cash settlement with the five remaining Reed heirs, and this was accepted by a council vote of 6 to 1. The dissenting councilman, Warren R. Swigart, found strong support from Aubrey Beebe and Melvin Stark, curator of Boytown Phila-Matic Center.

The opposition to the sale of the collection rallied subsequently, and on Jan. 23, 1973, City Council voted 6-0, with

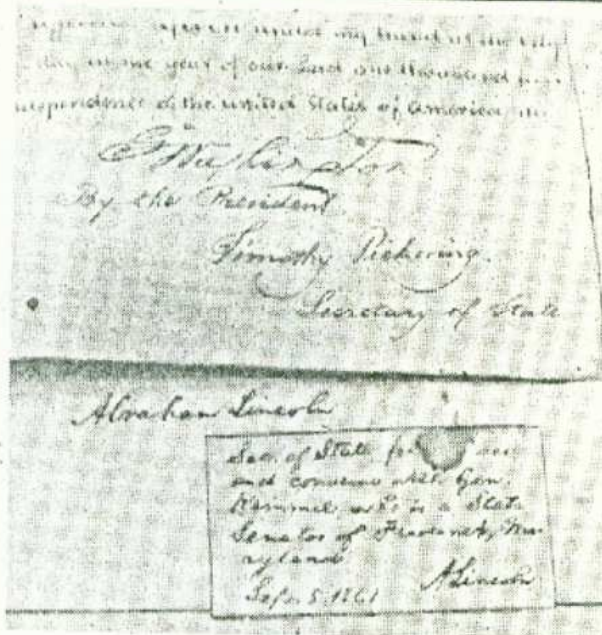
one abstention, to retain the collection.

A suggestion was made at that time by Beebe and Councilman Swigart to convert Omaha's Union Pacific Railroad station — which the railroad had offered to the city for \$1 — into a new museum, with the Byron Reed collection providing the nucleus for the public facility.

The station was acquired by the city from the railroad about six years ago, and converted into a Western Museum. While adequate space for the collection is available, the major problem of security could not readily be solved, except at great expense.

Commenting on the suggestion he had made 11 years ago, Beebe estimated the cost of providing a secure vault for the numismatic display would be more than \$1 million.



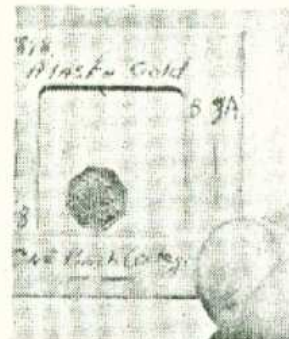


Washington and Lincoln signatures . . . on official documents.

Western Union office, was checked. The Joslyn Art Museum was considered at one time.

But the collection remain locked up.

Meanwhile, the closest most citizens can get is a slide show produced last year. It is shown to clubs, schools and others on request.



One pinch . . . Alaska gold.

## Reed Collection Could Again Go on Display

By Bob Levenson

World-Herald Staff Writer

Efforts to move the Byron Reed coin collection out of a darkened vault and into public display are under way again at City Hall.

Mayor Boyle said Thursday he has appointed a six-man committee to come up with a way to display and secure the valuable coin collection.

They hope to find a new home for the collection — now kept in a downtown Omaha bank vault — within a year.

The collection of 8,000 coins and medals and numerous books, documents and autographs has been locked in the vault for 18 years. It is insured by the city for \$3.5 million, although coin experts have said it may be worth more than that.

Reed, the wealthy Omaha real estate developer who died in 1891, willed the collection to the city, saying it should "be used and displayed for the benefit of the public."

It was displayed at the old city library at 19th and Harney Streets for 75 years. But after burglary attempts in 1963 and 1965, the valuables went into the vault.

The collection would fit in at the Western Heritage Museum, said City Councilman Steve Tomasek, one of the city committee members. But major security changes would be needed there.

"It's so wide open there," he said. "There are so many windows and doors, and people are not there 24 hours a day."

Tomasek said the committee may look into displaying the collection somewhere in the City County Building.

"There aren't too many places where we can put it," he said. "I think we're all agreed that we want to retain the collection. What we have to decide is where we can put it, how much it will cost to put it there, and where the money will come from."

Other committee members are John Cochrane, president of Norwest Bank; Charles Radda, vice president of finance for Northern Natural Gas Co.; John Deasey, assistant vice president of administration for Union Pacific; John Willemssen, vice president of planning for Northwestern Bell; and Melvin Stark, former director of the PhilaMatic collection at Boys Town.

4-12-84



# Flip a Coin? 2 Options for Byron Reed Display

By Paul Goodsell

World-Herald Staff Writer

Hidden for nearly two decades in a downtown Omaha bank vault, the Byron Reed coin collection may be closer than ever to finding a permanent display place.

City Council President Steve Tomasek said there are two options for displaying the valuable coin collection:

—Putting part of the collection at the new Federal Reserve Bank building.

—Displaying the full collection in a building that the Nebraska State Historical Society proposes to build near the Gerald Ford Birthsite and Gardens, 3202 Woolworth Ave.

Tomasek said a six-member committee appointed by Mayor Boyle a year ago is reviewing those two choices.

If the committee chooses the Federal Reserve Bank, the collection could be on partial display by early 1988, Committee Chairman John Cochrane said.

The Historical Society's proposed building won't be built for two or three years — or maybe longer, he said.

Cochrane said the committee has not discussed specifics of either proposal. The size and type of display areas, responsibility for security and maintenance, and other details have not been negotiated.

Before deciding where to display the collection, he said, committee members want to hire a curator who can help them make the choice. Later, the coin expert might manage and maintain the collection.

The committee is asking the city for money from its 1985 budget, Cochrane said.

"That's not a sure thing, so we want to look at other sources of funding."

## Coins, Medals, Documents

Cochrane and other committee members met Wednesday with representatives of a local foundation to discuss a possible grant.

Locked in a bank vault for 19 years, the collection contains 8,000 coins and medals and numerous books, documents and autographs. The city insures

collection stayed intact.

Tomasek and Cochrane said Omaha residents should be able to see their coins and medals.

"It's really a remarkable collection," Cochrane said.

## Among Nation's Finest

Tomasek said: "It's one of the three most beautiful and complete collections in the world."

Not all coin experts might agree with that, but most have ranked the Byron Reed collection among the top 15.

"It probably will never be duplicated again," Tomasek said.

Among the rarities of the collection:

—An 1804 silver dollar, one of 15 known to exist.

—A 1662 shilling, said to be the first type of coin struck in the Colonies.

—An 1829 gold piece.

—Autographs of Napoleon, Beethoven and a host of famous individuals, including many U.S. presidents.

—A 15-by-20-inch Gregorian chant book from the 15th century.

Cochrane said the Federal Reserve Bank would be a good place for the collection, even though only part of it could be displayed.

"That isn't a major constraint," he said. Because the collection is immense, he said, it would be difficult to find a place to show all of it at once.

Conceivably, he said, the Federal Reserve Bank could be an interim display site until the historical library is built, a project that may be a decade away.

James Paxson, board chairman of Standard Chemical Manufacturing Co., donated \$2 million to the Historical Society foundation last year for construction of the library. He also purchased four of five lots needed for the building and donated them to the society.

In making the donation, Paxson asked only that the center be built by the year 2000. "I'm in no hurry on this," he said then.

Neither are committee members, Cochrane said.

"We're not going to rush into some inferior program of display," he said.



1804 silver dollar ... Only 15 are known to exist.

the collection for \$2.85 million.

Reed, an Omaha real estate developer, willed the city his collection when he died in 1891.

In recent years, the collection has spawned another kind of hobby in City Hall: proposing ideas for selling or displaying the coins and documents.

Some people suggested putting the coins in the Western Heritage Museum, an idea generally dismissed because of security problems.

Tomasek once offered a variation on that one: Take jail cells from the old South Omaha City Hall, move them to the museum and secure the coins inside them.

Other suggested locations were Joslyn Art Museum and the former Immanuel Hospital, which stood at 38th Street and Merced Avenue, but recently was demolished.

Until 1968, the city had the collection on display at the old city library at 19th and Harney Streets. After burglary attempts in 1963 and 1965, the valuables were put into the vault.

During the 1970s, city officials talked of selling the collection to finance the construction of the W. Dale Clark library. The library was built, but the

WORLD  
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5-14-85



# Search continues for home for Reed collection

The extensive coin collection donated to the city of Omaha, Neb., by 19th century real estate developer Byron Reed may be on its way to finding a permanent home.

The collection was donated to the city in Reed's will in 1891 and was kept in the Omaha Public Library at 19th and Harney streets. In 1966, after two burglary attempts, the collection was stored in a bank vault in downtown Omaha.

Currently there are two leading options for displaying the collection: Part of the holdings could be displayed in the new Federal Reserve Bank building as early as the spring of 1986, or the full collection could be displayed in a building that the Nebraska State

Historical Society proposes to build near the Gerald Ford Birthsite and Gardens at 3202 Woolworth Ave.

If the collection were to be displayed in the Federal Reserve building, only part of it could be displayed at any one time. That would not be a major problem, however, according to John Cochran, chairman of the six-member committee appointed by Mayor Michael Boyle to investigate possible solutions. Cochran said it would be difficult to find a place where the entire collection could be displayed anyway.

If officials pursue the NSHS option, there could be a delay of as much as 10 or 20 years before the collection could be

permanently displayed. A major consideration in displaying the collection is security, the costs of which limit viable solutions to the problem of choosing a site.

Among the holdings of the

## Newsletter offers rare coins

Senior numismatist Thomas J. Becker of Bowers and Merena Galleries emphasizes in the firm's June-July Special Coin Letter that scarce, rare and desirable coins need not be expensive.

Becker says he has been very busy buying and has a wide selection of quarters, silver dollars, half cents and gold

Reed collection are 6,359 coins, 1,260 medals, 615 Confederate notes, 2,136 other notes, 832 autographs, 1,836 books and 3,243 pamphlets. Included among the coins are more than 400 patterns and experimental coins.

Reed's collection was generally regarded as one of the most complete at the time of his death in 1891; it is insured for \$3.85 million but its actual value is estimated at \$8 million to \$10 million. Viewing of Reed's holdings was first

opened to the public in 1893. Omaha City Council President Steve Tomasek said that anyone interested in looking at the collection and making recommendations for displaying it is welcome to do so.

coins. Among the items highlighted in the letter are: a 1907 Saint-Gaudens, Roman Numerals, High Relief double eagle with wire rim, in choice Brilliant Uncirculated, Mint State 65, listed at \$29,500; a 1901-S Barber quarter dollar in choice BU, MS-65 to gem BU, MS-67, \$27,950; an 1835 Capped Bust Type dime in

choice Unc, MS-65, with light golden and gray toning, \$8,350; and an 1806 Large cent, Sheldon 270 (Penny Whimsy by William H. Sheldon). About Uncirculated 50, glossy light brown lustrous surfaces, \$2,750.

### First coins

Coins were first struck at the West Point Bullion Depository July 29, 1974, but they bore no Mint mark.

leries Inc., Box 1224, Wolfeboro, N.H. 03394-1224.



# City Still Seeks a Home For Its 'Hidden Treasure'

By Jeff Gauger

World-Herald Staff Writer

Question: Where lies a hidden treasure shared collectively by Omaha residents for nearly 100 years?

Answer: In a downtown Omaha bank vault where, for its own safety, the treasure has been locked in darkness.

The treasure is the Byron Reed coin collection, bequeathed to the city and its residents in 1891 by a wealthy Omaha real estate developer whose will stipulated that the collection be displayed "for at least a portion of the time (if not all the time)."

Since 1965, however, the collection of 8,000 coins and medals has been hidden from public view to protect it from theft. A committee appointed by Mayor

Boyle is currently at work trying to find a place to display the coins.

Would-be burglars who attempted to break into the collection's longtime display at the old public library at 19th and Harney Streets apparently had the right idea about the coins' value.

Several coin collectors — called numismatists — were asked their opinion of the collection by The World-Herald. They rated parts of the Byron Reed collection tops in the nation among known coin sets.

Its precise value is unknown, but some numismatists say it could exceed \$6 million.

"I would venture to say the only collection in the United States that would

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# City Still Seeks a Home For Its 'Hidden 7'

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•Continued from Page 1

be better would be (at) the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., said numismatist Robert Hilt, a Las Vegas resident with business interests in the Omaha area.

"It is an extreme rarity to have a collection of this quality in the public sector," Hilt said.

Ed Rochette, executive vice president of the American Numismatic Association, said the Reed collection may be one of the largest remaining coin sets amassed by a private collector that hasn't been split up and sold.

## Little Is Known

Some numismatists, such as Charles Hoskins, director of the authentication bureau of the International Numismatic Society in Washington, said a few people who wish to remain anonymous possess exceptional private collections that might compare to the Reed collection.

Little is known about such collections, he said.

Hoskins also said several universities have coin holdings, usually obtained on the death of a private collector. However, many colleges have sold their once-magnificent collections, he said.

Hilt referred to the Reed collection's set of American coins, which he and others said is second only to that held by the Smithsonian.

Melvin Stark, retired curator of the Boys Town stamp and money museum, said Reed collected a set of U.S. coins that is nearly complete through 1890, the year before Reed died.

"Probably one-fourth of the collection is U.S. coins, but probably they represent about three-fourths of the coins' value," said Stark, one of a handful of people to have seen the coins since they were locked away.

## Pattern Coins

As a member of the now disbanded Byron Reed Historical Society, Stark said, he spent many volunteer hours helping catalog the collection in the 1960s and '70s. He now serves on the committee that is reviewing options for displaying the coins.

Stark said the Reed collection is noted especially for its pattern coins and possibly has the best set of such coins in existence.

Patterns are trial coins that were never circulated because Congress rejected their designs.

Usually 100 or fewer of such coins were made, making them extremely rare today, said Richard Doty, curator of modern coins for the American Numismatic Society in New York City.

Doty said the market for pattern coins is small, but the few numismatists dealing in them are willing to pay big money to obtain good coins.



Richard Janda/World-Herald

Heenan examines Gregorian chant book ... at the W. Dale Clark Library.

Other coins in the Reed collection include a sizeable number of the coins of ancient Greece and Rome, fewer coins of modern Europe, a few coins from colonial America and some badly deteriorated paper money, Stark said.

To the numismatist, "modern" means any coin minted after the 15th century, coinciding with the use of modern coinmaking techniques.

Altogether, according to a tally presented by Omaha librarian Edith Tobitt in the 1920s, the Reed collection contains 6,869 coins. An additional 1,280 medals bring the total to more than 8,000.

The coins now sit in a vault at Nor-

west Bank, 1919 Douglas St., insured by the city for \$3.5 million, said Stark.

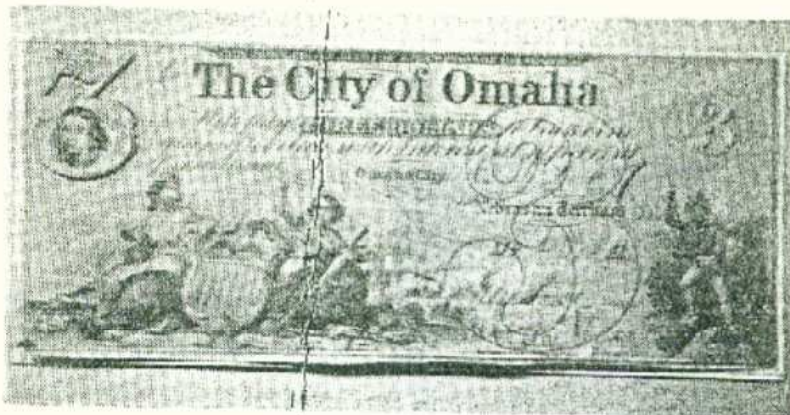
After 20 years in a bank vault, the Reed coin collection has slipped into relative obscurity to all except older and more dedicated numismatists.

"Older people know of it, but we're a younger generation now," said Al Moore, a collector of 35 years and owner of an Omaha coin store. "We probably can't get one out of a hundred who know about it now."

Doty said, "There are a few collectors who know about it."

Stark said, "Nothing has been said or done about it since they took it out of the library and put it in the bank. That's





Courtesy of Byron Reed Historical Society

City of Omaha \$3 note ... issued in 1857 to finance building Nebraska's second territorial capitol, according to the historical society.

## Reed Coin 'Watchdogs' Seek Continuing Role

By Jeff Gauger

World-Herald Staff Writer

The Byron Reed Historical Society wants to help find a public home for the City of Omaha's valuable collection of coins, books and autographs that few people have seen in 20 years, society members say.

The society, accustomed since 1973 to being the city-sanctioned patron and watchdog over the Reed collection, last year saw Mayor Boyle appoint a new advisory committee to get the collection out of its hiding place in a downtown bank vault.

Now, said member Leonard Owen, the Byron Reed Historical Society is awaiting a signal from Boyle that its members will be given a role in the efforts to find a home for the collection.

"We have every right to feel a little bit slighted, because we've been working on these coins for about 25 years," said Owen, one of the society's half dozen or so members, all coin collectors.

The signal may not come soon, Boyle said last week that the former committee made up of historical society members has completed the work it



An 1804 dollar ... called collection's "focal point."

was appointed to do — catalog the Reed coins.

"We're very grateful for their work," Boyle said.

The mayor pointed out that one member of the new committee is Melvin Stark, a society member and an expert coin collector.

"There is no need for a cataloging

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# Reed Coin 'Watchdogs' Seek Continuing Role

Continued from Page 1

group at this time," Owen said. "So you might say we were relieved of our duties. But our duties were done."

The society is eager to help. "We have no direct involvement in the selection of a site," said Robert Vassell, society treasurer. "Personally I wish that that would be changed because, as I say, we have the expertise."

Owen said few people, if any, know more than society members do about the 8,000 coins and medals willed to the city in 1881 by Byron Reed, a wealthy Omaha real estate developer.

Reed's collection also contained books, autographs of famous people and other documents which now are housed at the W. Dale Clark Library.

At \$204 a dollar, which Reed purchased for \$570, according to information compiled by the historical society, is considered the collection's focal point.

Collector Stark estimated its value at \$200,000 to \$300,000.

It is one of only 15 such coins known to still exist. Although it bears an 1804 date, the coin was struck in the 1830s to be used in presentation sets for foreign dignitaries, the information states.

Society members consider themselves among the handful of people who have seen the collection since the coins and other items were locked up for safekeeping.

By their own calculation, they spent thousands of hours over many years cataloging the Reed coins to take stock of the treasure, now insured by the city for \$3.5 million. The cataloging began in 1963, when some members of the Omaha Coin Club started sorting through the coins at the collection's longtime home in the old library at 19th and Harney Streets.

Members of what later became the Byron Reed Historical Society were among those who volunteered for those early cataloging sessions.

That work was stopped after two

their attempts persuaded city officials to move the collection to safer quarters in 1965.

According to its members, the historical society was born in the early 1970s when club members objected to talk at the time about selling the Reed collection to help finance construction of a new public library.

Offers of \$1 million for the coins had spurred the idea to sell. The coin enthusiasts argued that the collection was a public treasure that should not be lost.

Largely through their efforts, society members say, no sale occurred.

Their outcry caught then-Mayor Leahy's attention. In 1973, he accepted their offer to catalog the coin collection and appointed a council member to serve as liaison. The committee was registered as a non-profit organization in 1976.

Owen said Mayors Zorinsky and Veys renewed the city's relationship with the historical society.

Mayor aide Barbara Wright, who is working with the new committee, said the mayor's office has had no formal relationship with the historical society since Boyle was elected. "They — other than the past history and caring for the coins — have not been involved," Ms. Wright said.

With the cataloging finished and the new committee at work, the society has felt lost and perhaps a little ignored, members said. "We're kind of re-viewing what direction we should go," said Jerome Grossman, attorney for the Byron Reed Historical Society Inc.

Five of the six people Boyle appointed to the new committee in April 1984 were drawn from Omaha's business community. They are the committee's chairman, John Cochrane, president of Norwest Bank; Charles Radda, vice president of finance for Northern Natural Gas Co.; John Deasey, assistant vice president of administration for Union Pacific System; and John Willemssen, vice president for Northwestern Bell. The sixth member is Stark, retired curator of the Boys Town Philatelic collection of stamps, coins and paper money.



# numismatic news

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## Homeless 1804 \$1 loses hobby 'watchdog'

The Byron Reed Historical Society, which for more than a decade has been active in cataloging and preserving the famed numismatist's collection on behalf of the city of Omaha, Neb., appears to have been eased out of its role as "watchdog" for the \$3.5 million accumulation and its stellar attraction, one of 15 known 1804 silver dollars.

The city's current mayor, Michael Boyle, recently appointed a committee, largely made up of local businessmen, to find a public home for the Reed Collection of coins, rare books and autographs. The collection, which includes more than 8,000 coins and medals, was willed to the city in 1891 by Reed, a pioneer Omaha land developer.

The collection was stored in the city library until 1965, when two theft attempts persuaded city officials to move it to safer quarters in a bank vault. Two years earlier, members of the Omaha Coin Club had begun cataloging the collection.

In the early 1970s, the city was offered \$1 million for the numismatic portion of the collection

to help finance a new public library. Feeling that the Reed Collection was a public treasure which should not be lost, members of the OCC formed the Byron Reed Historical Society to fight the proposed sale. Their efforts won the support of then-mayor Eugene Leahy, who formally recognized their committee and appointed a city council member to act as liaison while the Society continued its cataloging effort. In 1976, the Society was registered as a non-profit organization.

By their own estimate, the Society has spent thousands of hours cataloging the collection, which the city has insured for \$3.5 million. The cataloging continued during the terms of Mayors Zorinsky and Veys. The Byron Reed Historical Society's relationship with the city's collection appears to have come to an end under the term of Mayor Boyle, however.

In appointing his new committee charged with finding a home for the collection, Boyle said the Society had completed the work it was assigned to do — cataloging the collection and

expressed his gratitude for their efforts.

Leonard Owen, a founding member of the Byron Reed Historical Society, was quoted in the Aug. 25 issue of the *Omaha World Herald*. "We have every right to feel a little bit slighted because we've been working on these coins for about 25 years. There is no need for a cataloging group at this time," he added, "so you might say we were relieved of our duties."

Society members feel its experience and expertise with the

collection qualify them to provide input for site selection of a new home. One member of the Society, Melvin Stark, retired curator of the Boy's Town Philatelic collection of coins, currency and stamps, has been appointed to the mayor's new committee.

Few persons have seen the Reed Collection in the past 20 years and the goal of finding an appropriate site to place it on public display has always been a priority with the Society, according to Owen.



The Byron Reed Collection, including a specimen of the 1804 dollar purchased for \$570 a century ago, is looking for a home in



# Joslyn to Display Rare Reed Coins Within a Year

By Kevin Collison

World-Herald Staff Writer

After almost 20 years of seclusion, the \$3.85 million Byron Reed coin collection may be partially on display within a year at the Joslyn Art Museum.

"It was a difficult job we had before us, and it's joyous to hand over the baton and responsibility of the collection to the Joslyn," said John Cochran Friday.

Cochran, president of Norwest Bank Omaha and chairman of a committee charged with the task of finding a home for the 8,000-piece collection, said Joslyn has agreed to negotiate the display of the collection.

Henry Flood Robert, Joslyn director, said it will be about six months before the museum completes arrangements for displaying the collection of coins, medals and other items given to the city after the death in 1891 of Omaha real estate developer Byron Reed.

Robert said the first coins may be on display within a year.

## Kept in Bank Vault

A committee appointed by Mayor Boyle has worked for about 20 months to find a home for the collection. It has been stored in a bank vault for security reasons since 1938.

"I feel the plan to display the collection at the Joslyn insures the integrity, security and longevity of the coin collection and will guarantee it is properly interpreted," Boyle said Friday.

Display of the collection at the Joslyn must be approved by the art museum board of directors and the City Council, officials said.

Cochran said the decision on where to house the Byron Reed collection was difficult.

"Security was an important part of it as well as the professional display, research and interpretation needed," he said. "I don't think anyone believes the collection has been given proper care and a home since it was given to the city."

## At Old Public Library

Until 1966, the city had the collection on display at the old city library at 19th and Harney Streets. After burglary attempts in 1963 and 1965, the valuables were placed in a bank vault.

Included in the coin collection, which some experts have said is one of the top 15 in the world, are:

—An 1804 silver dollar, one of 15 known to exist.

—A 1652 shilling, said to be the first type of coin struck in the Colonies.

—An 1829 gold piece.

—Autographs of Napoleon, Beethoven and a host of famous individuals, including many U.S. presidents.

—A 15- by 20-inch Gregorian chant book from the 15th century.

Cochran said other locations were considered, including the new Federal Reserve Bank near 24th and Farnam Streets and a Nebraska State Historical Society building proposed near the Gerald Ford Birthsite and Gardens, 3202 Woolworth Ave.

"The federal bank had limited space to begin with and didn't have the curator and scholarly approach we wanted," he said. "The historical society didn't feel they could afford displaying the collection."

Cochran said committee members were particularly impressed with Joslyn because of the quality of the Karl Bodmer display of western art on loan from HNG/InterNorth.

Because of space considerations, Robert said, the Byron Reed collection may be separated and displayed in various areas of the art museum. He said 80 percent of the museum's art is in storage at any one time.

"If this were a collection of large paintings, we'd be in trouble," he said.

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Jim Burnett/World-Herald

Inspecting a few of the coins destined for display at Joslyn ... From left, Cochran, Boyle, Stark and Robert.

## Some of Reed's Coin Collection Will Be Put on Display at Joslyn

• Continued from Page 17

"but coins are not large. It won't impact massive amounts of space."

Robert said some ancient coins may be displayed with the Joslyn collection of Greek vases in the mezzanine area and some of the American coins may go in the American artifacts display area.

"We also may locate the coins where there are certain collections that aren't as popular," he said.

Robert said a coin collection fits into the Joslyn's role as a "general art museum." He also said it will help make the museum a center for numismatics, the study of coins.

"I can't say a coin collection fits completely with everything we do," he said, "but they certainly relate to the artistic, historic and political culture of mankind."

"It's a terrific opportunity."

Although the city will retain

ownership of the coin collection, Robert said, the Joslyn will need assurances that it will have authority over it for a substantial amount of time.

That authority, he said, will be needed for Joslyn officials to seek the money from foundation, government and other sources for remodeling the museum, maintaining and guarding the coins, and hiring a curator to supervise the collection.

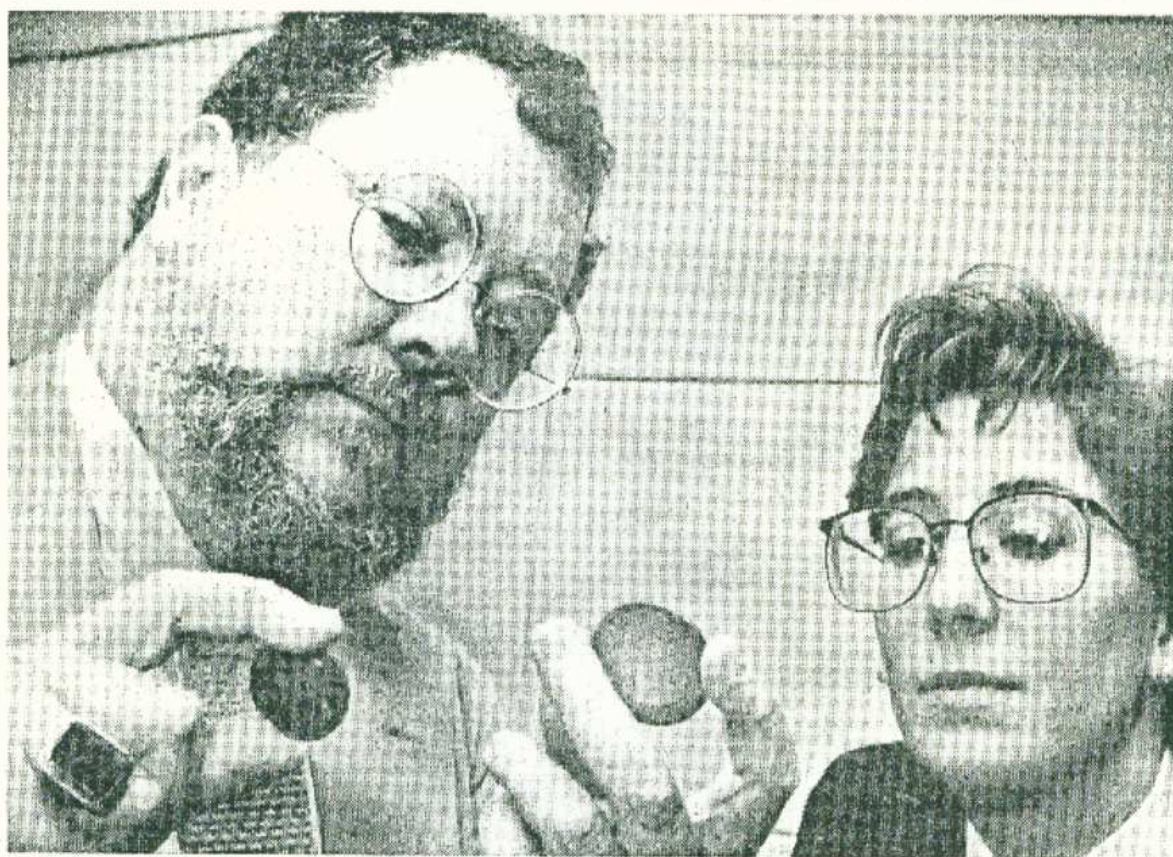
Robert said it will cost about \$250,000 for the remodeling work. He said he had no estimate of the cost of the other tasks. The museum director said Joslyn has no plans to ask the city for assistance.

Others serving on the committee are: John Deasey, a Union Pacific Railroad vice president; Charles Radda, a Northern Natural Gas Co. vice president; Melvin Stark, former director of the Philamatic at Boys Town; and City Council President Steve Tomasek.



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Robert Paskach/World-Herald

Doty and Deborah C. O'Donnell, museum curator of history and education . . . Coins even the Smithsonian doesn't have.

## 'Some Tremendous Rarities' Coin Expert Sings Collection's Praises

By Rich Laden

World-Herald Staff Writer

The Byron Reed coin collection, to be displayed next year at the Omaha History Museum, contains some "incredibly rich" pieces and deserves a place among the world's finest collections, a Washington, D.C., coin expert said Friday in Omaha.

"You've got a couple of things the Smithsonian doesn't have; you've got some things nobody has," said Richard Doty, curator of the Smithsonian Institution's National Numismatic Collections. "It's not genuinely known, but it deserves to be known, because there are some tremendous rarities here."

Doty is serving as a museum consultant as it prepares for the fall 1987 display of the 8,000-piece collection, valued at \$7 million. He is not representing the Smithsonian in that capacity.

### Lighting, Display Themes

Reed, an Omaha real estate developer, gave his collection of coins, medals and documents to the city upon his death in 1891.

The collection was displayed for many years at the old city library at 19th and Harney Streets. After several

burglary attempts, however, it was moved to a bank vault in 1966.

The Peter Kiewit Foundation donated \$900,000 to remodel a portion of the Union Station building, 801 S. 10th St., which houses the Omaha History Museum, for display of the collection.

Doty, 44, of Arlington, Va., was in Omaha to review the collection and discuss its display with museum officials. He originally assisted museum officials in appraising the collection's value for insurance purposes.

Doty said his role would be to make certain the collection is displayed properly, discussing items such as lighting and display themes. The collection must be displayed to give museum visitors an insight into its importance, he said.

For example, all Civil War coins and documents might be displayed together, along with confederate money and local Omaha notes, to give visitors an idea of what money looked like at that period, he said.

Doty said he will offer some advice about the care and preservation of the collection. He will not be involved in security.

While it is a small collection com-

pared with some in the world, Doty said, the Reed collection's quality stems from its rare U.S. coins in general, such as an 1804 silver dollar and an 1825 half-eagle \$5 gold piece. There are perhaps a half-dozen of the silver dollars and three of the \$5 gold pieces known to exist, he said.

The Reed collection also contains many rare "pattern coins." Pattern coins are those in which a coin die was made, but Congress either didn't approve the coin or approved it sometime after it was originally made.

### Care, Preservation

Reed collected pattern coins for several years before they became popular at the turn of the century, Doty said. One such pattern coin Doty examined Friday was an 1877 \$50 gold piece, which was struck in copper. About a half-dozen exist in the world.

Some of the coins in the Reed collection are of the type that might be auctioned once every 50 years, he said.

Doty said he is pleased that a museum like the Omaha History Museum has the collection.

"I'm happy to see something off the Eastern Seaboard," he said. "We need more specialized museums devoted to a municipality."



# Three Experts Helping Plan Reed Display

•Continued from Page 1

displays in the country," Lawless said.

Lawless, formerly director of exhibits for the Museum of American History at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., said the consultants want to organize the collection around the life of Byron Reed.

Reed was an Omaha real estate developer who gave his collection to the city upon his death in 1891. Lawless said initial research indicates Reed collected most of his items through agents working abroad.

"How did this man get countless contacts worldwide to collect these coins?" he asked. "This man was a world-class citizen living in Omaha, Neb., when there was barely a building over two stories high."

The Kiewit Foundation has donated \$900,000 to remodel the former restaurant area of the Union Station building, 801 S. 10th St., where the Omaha History Museum is located, for the collection. Bahr Vermeer & Haecker is the local architect.

Local consultants are Robert Bodnar, a former exhibit director at the history museum, and Melvin Stark, retired director of the Boys Town Philanthropic Center.

Not all the collection will be on display in the 3,500-square-foot space set aside for the exhibit, Klein said.

"It's a very large collection and very broad," he said. "Choices will be made, and there may be provisions for temporary exhibits."

The three national consultants will be in Omaha three to four times to discuss the display design. A tentative timetable calls for construction to begin this winter and opening of the exhibit by fall 1987.

Original plans called for the exhibit to resemble Reed's 19th-century library. Architect Michael Alley said that plan is being considered, but other display methods also are being discussed.

Lawless said the consultants intend to make the exhibit of coins and documents interesting to a variety of audiences, ranging from school group tours to serious collectors and scholars. "It's a very difficult task," he said.

The Byron Reed collection had been displayed for many years at the old city library at 19th and Harney Streets. After several burglary attempts, however, it was moved to a bank vault in 1966.

Lawless said security measures have improved significantly in the last 20 years.

"Electronic devices have come along that can provide top security at a reasonable cost," he said.

Museum officials believe the collection will turn the Omaha History Museum, formerly called the Western Heritage Museum, into a major attraction.

"I see this as a very different type of

# 3 Experts Helping to Display 'World-Class' Coin Collection

By Kevin Collison

World-Herald Staff Writer 8-12-86

Three experts from around the nation are helping to plan the display of the \$7 million Byron Reed coin and document collection at the Omaha History Museum.

"It's a world-class collection, it really is," said Larry Klein, a California designer who directed graphics for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. "This collection would be a feather in the cap of any metropolitan area in the country."

Klein, along with Keith Reynolds of Connecticut and Benjamin Lawless of Maryland, was in Omaha Monday and Tuesday, working with museum officials and architects on preliminary concepts for the display of the 8,000-piece collection.

Included in the collection, which some experts have said is one of the top 15 in the world, are:

—An 1804 silver dollar, one of 15 known to exist.

—A 1652 shilling, said to be the first type of coin struck in the Colonies.

—Autographs of Napoleon, Beethoven and a host of famous individuals, including many U.S. presidents.

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"Electronic devices have come along that can provide top security at a reasonable cost," he said.

Museum officials believe the collection will turn the Omaha History Museum, formerly called the Western Heritage Museum, into a major attraction.

"I see this as a very different type of collection," Lawless said. "People will be dazzled and excited. It is a very classy collection and one that tourists will find attractive."



# Museum Is Embroiled In Business vs. Arts Rift

By Paul Goodsell  
World-Herald Staff Writer

The internal conflict at the Omaha History Museum reflects a rift between business executives and history buffs on the museum board over management practices and financial matters, past and present board members said Friday.

"It's a classic confrontation between arts groups and the business people who serve on those groups' boards,"

said Marshall Faith, who resigned last month as president of the museum's board.

On one side were the long-time board members and history buffs like board chairman Ronald W. Hunter, an Omaha lawyer. They had opened the museum, formerly known as the Western Heritage Museum, in 1973, and they were loyal to executive director Michael Kinsel.

On the other side was Faith, president and chief executive officer of Secular Co., and his business-oriented allies, including large donors like the Peter Kiewit Foundation. They said Kinsel lacked the management ability to lead the museum during a period of rapid growth that was spurred largely by foundation grants.

## Grants Put on Hold

Hunter, now acting president, said Faith had been "annointed" by the Kiewit Foundation to take over leadership at the museum when the foundation awarded the first of two large grants totalling \$2.7 million.

When the 39-member board rebuffed Faith's effort to oust Kinsel last month, Faith resigned. The Kiewit Foundation and the Gilbert H. and Martha M. Hitchcock Foundation have put their grants on hold, threatening more than \$2 million in promised funding for the museum.

Faith said he made it clear to museum board members that they were risking contributions by not adopting a more business-oriented course.

"This isn't the place, in my opinion, to get the artsy-craftsy types in control," he said.

Faith said the board rejected his arguments.

"They very clearly chose a 'we can do it ourselves' approach rather than acting in a fiscally responsible way," Faith said.

About the same time as Faith's resignation, at least four other board members left the board.



Hunter

Faith

omatic" of a larger problem.

"We have always been concerned about the fiscal responsibility of the Western Heritage operation," Mrs. Ziegenbein said. "It was the extreme budget overrun late in 1986 that brought this situation to a climax, and that also caused the museum to borrow substantial funds."

The \$250,000 debt was particularly distressing to the foundation's trustees, she said, since the foundation had provided nearly \$900,000 in grants during an 18-month period.

Faith said he was asked jointly in 1985 by representatives of both the Kiewit Foundation and the museum to bring "business thinking" to the museum operation.

"I'm a businessman," he said. "I believe in balanced budgets and I believe in fiscal responsibility and being good stewards of the money that's entrusted to you."

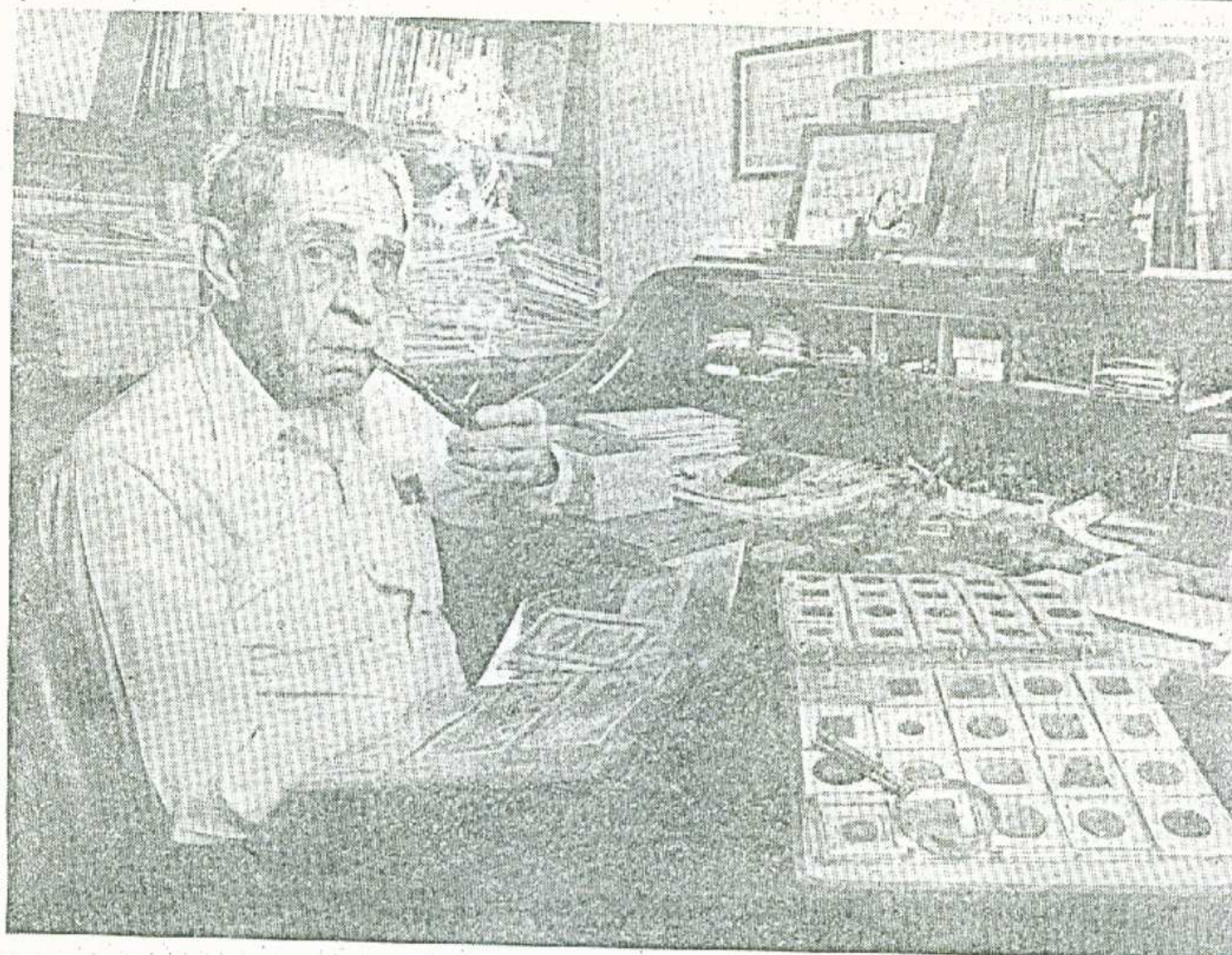
To date, the Kiewit Foundation has paid about \$800,000 of a total \$2.7 million in grant money it had committed to the museum. The remaining \$1.8 million is on hold pending a complete audit.

Mrs. Ziegenbein said the foundation wants the museum to account for its spending since 1983, as well as to review the revenues that the museum claimed in qualifying for a matching grant from the Kiewit Foundation.

Another \$250,000 grant from the Hitchcock Foundation — promised for 1988 — also is on hold because of the financial questions, said Denman Kountze Jr., chairman of the foundation, in a telephone interview from Naples, Fla.

"It seems to me they wound up in the hole, and I want to know why," he said.





Chris Young/World-1

Stark is the closest thing to a caretaker the Reed collection has ever had. "People don't like to spend as much time with things today," he says.

## Byron Reed Collection Nears Exhibition Omaha's Unsung Hero of the Coins

By Susan Darst Williams

Metro Extra Correspondent

Melvin Stark is a thin man in a small, north-west Omaha house who smokes fragrant Dutch pipe tobacco and has a quiet, abiding love for the coins.

The coins, you ask? In Omaha, it's "the" coins. The treasures of the \$7 million Byron Reed collection.

The city has owned the collection since the 1891 death of the donor, real estate magnate Byron Reed. But it has been kept in storage more years than it has been available for the public to see.

That will change some time next year, when the collection's 8,000 coins and documents finally will be displayed as an important new exhibit at the Western Heritage Museum.

It's a world-class collection, experts say. One of the 15 best collections anywhere. Tremendously rare.

And though he is too modest to put it this way, Melvin Stark is their longtime, steady, unsung hero. He knows the Reed collection better than

served as a unofficial volunteer curator.

From now until the exhibit opens, Stark will be helping to ready the exhibit, serving as a \$100-a-day consultant to the museum.

But it's the first time in all these years of work with the coins that Stark will be paid.

The money is not what he wants, anyway.

"I've been thinking for a long time that I'd like to see these coins up on display," Stark said. "I told them at the city and Western Heritage, 'You guys get moving. I'm 72 years old and damn it, I want to see these coins up before I die.'"

It would be a dream come true for Stark, a numismatist, or coin collector. More than 50 years ago, he became interested in coin collecting when his mother entered an 1833 coin in a contest sponsored by Brandeis department store.

The age of her coin impressed her son, the youngest of nine children. But his mother didn't even come close to winning. That intrigued Stark. She gave him a bag with a handful of old coins. He liked learning about them, and started collecting.

Stark entered from World-1

tion. They spent it all on candy.

Attention turned elsewhere. He married thea, and they had daughter Judy. He concentrated on work and family. But in the 1950s, Stark started up again, collecting.

Stark says of his coins and paper money, "I don't have a really great collection but I do have some pretty nice pieces."

He found one of his favorites by pure chance. "A coin dealer had died and his wife was his stuff. Fishing around in it, I found this 1899 Philippine copper centavo." He'd never seen anything like it: a sun inside a triangle on one side, a helmeted soldier on the other.

It was said to be the only one of its kind. Stark's find was written up in *Coin World*, a trade journal with a circulation of more than 88,000 worldwide and other publications.

Recently, an Illinois man came up with just like it. But it's still special, indeed, to Stark. "I like the thrill of looking them up and

Coins



# Coins

Continued from Page 1

out about them," he said of his coins. "That's how I got smart. People don't like to spend as much time with things today." He added that he thinks that's too bad.

As former president of both the Omaha and the Nebraska coin collector's associations, it figures he would be asked to help with the Reed collection. And Stark is the closest thing to a curator, or caretaker, the Reed collection has ever had.

In 1953, Stark first encountered the coins. It was upon request of the late Frank Gibson, former library director for the City of Omaha.

The coins were in disarray on the third floor of the old library building at 19th and Harney Streets. They were mostly jumbled together in cigar boxes, in peril of damage from being rubbed against each other, the ancient Greek coins mixed up with the American colonials, the Moroccan coins with the currency of Cleopatra.

## In Paper Sleeves

Two nights a week, three hours a night, through much of the 1960s and '70s, Stark said, he sorted through the coins, pored through a 24-volume coin catalog to identify them, assessed their condition, appraised their value and made out inventory sheets.

He wrapped them for safety in "two-by-twos," paper sleeves of two square inches that coin collectors use. And he organized them in narrow boxes, 100 paper sleeves in each.

The operation took place under guard, first at the library, then at the safe-deposit box room at a bank, and then in the vault at the Boys Town museum, where Stark worked.

It took more than 15 years, he said.

The pages of this massive inventory fill four three-ring binders.

Stark volunteered those thousands of hours. There were a half-dozen others who helped, but Stark put in the most.

Why?

"There's coins there you'd never, ever get to see, some of 'em are so scarce," Stark said. "There's no way you'd ever duplicate the thing."

The collection's \$7 million value was attached by the Smithsonian Institution's Richard Doty. Stark says of Doty, "He's the sharpest guy I've ever seen about coins." Stark helped Doty look through the collection recently, since Stark knew where each of the 8,000 pieces would be located.

Stark says Doty told him the estimate is conservative. Stark concludes that \$10 million is more like it, and that's the figure he uses.

But the value goes deeper than monetary, Stark said. By studying coins and paper money, you learn about history, politics, geography, printing, metals and much, much more, he said. It will be a great opportunity for the public, he said, and a plum for Omaha.

That's why, in 1972 and '73, when the City Council considered selling the collection for a million dollars to raise money for a new library, Stark led the fight to keep the coins here.

But he was no political lion. "It was a couple of days after Christmas and everybody was off work. I was sitting around in my pajamas reading the World-Herald when I found out they were going to vote on it that very day," Stark said.

"I called up the people who were supposed to be riding herd on the thing, and nobody was going to go." He persuaded one and made a quick lunch date with the Rev. Nicholas Wegner, then the head of Boys Town, to secure his tentative OK to display part of the coins in the Boys Town museum if need be.

Then he raced to City Hall for the council meeting. And sat through to the end at 5 p.m. The coin vote was last on the agenda. "Any smart people would've gone home by then," he said. "I'm sure they planned it that way."

He said he spoke for a half-hour. "We couldn't get them to vote not to sell it, but at least we got them to delay a vote for two weeks." That was enough time to marshal support, Stark said.

Later, Stark said, Joselyn Art Museum Director Henry Flood Robert told him, "The city owes you a debt."

WORLD-HERALD

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Even so, Stark's name is not often mentioned in the thick scrapbook of news clippings he has kept about the Reed collection. In 1973, Stark was one of two people with combinations to the vaults that held the coins. The other man forgot his. They had to call in a locksmith to drill them open. The one who forgot, City Councilman Richard Takechi, got his picture in the paper; the one who remembered, Stark, did not.

## With Experts

Earlier this decade, Stark wrote to Mayor Mike Boyle, volunteering to serve on a committee to choose an exhibit site for the collection. Stark, who used to make his living returning empty bottles to local soft drink companies and had retired as the curator of the small Boys Town museum, ended up on the committee with a bank president and four vice presidents of the largest businesses in town.

"All those big wheels and me," Stark said with a smile.

Recently the museum called in three experts who charge thousands of dollars a day, from Washington, D.C., New York and California, to consult on the exhibit. The Kiewit Foundation has donated money to remodel the former kitchen area of the Union Station building, 901 S. 10th St., where Western Heritage Museum is located. They called in Stark, too, as an unofficial — and unpaid — local consultant.

Stark said he waited through three days of talks to hear the trio discuss what kind of vault would be needed. Finally, he brought it up.

"They stopped and stared and said, 'What vault?' and I said, 'You're going to have a \$10 million collection and you're not going to have a vault?'"

The next day's story in The World-Herald, headlined: "History Museum 'Vault' for Display Coins to Be Finished in '89," described plans for a secured exhibit space on two floors, along with symbolic vault doors. Stark didn't receive credit for the idea.

Oh, well. You're never a hero in your own hometown — to coin a phrase.



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# Coin World

• THE WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF THE ENTIRE NUMISMATIC FIELD •

## Congress commemor legislation awaiting Reagan's signature Authorizes three coins for 1989 program

By Michele Orzano  
COIN WORLD Staff Writer

Legislation commemorating the Bicentennial of Congress with three denominations of coins was approved by voice vote in the Senate Oct. 20 and sent to the White House for President Reagan's signature.

Meanwhile, several other numismatic-related proposals still awaited action as the 100th Congress headed for adjournment.

Passage of the Bicentennial of Congress commemorative coins bill by legislators, many wearing lapel buttons that said "Free the 100th," may well be the last piece of num-

only to the U.S. Capitol Preservation Commission and the Secretary has consulted with and received and considered the comments of the commission."

Byrd's amendment also changed the use of the surcharges — \$35 per \$5 gold coin; \$7 per silver dollar; and \$1 per half dollar coin — directing the surcharges to be deposited in the Capitol Preservation Fund and be available to the U.S. Capitol Preservation Commission, rather than using the surcharges to retire the national debt.

On Oct. 20 the House concurred with the Senate amendment and added a few of its own:

- A cap on the amount of surcharges — \$20 million — that the U.S. Capitol Preservation Commission may use.



ONE OF 15 KNOWN 1804 silver dollars, the Pamelee Specimen of this famed rarity resides in the Byron Reed collection.



UNIVERSAL Press Clipping Bureau

# Omaha man leaves unusual legacy

## Museum displays \$15 million coin, document collection

By Jim Nolan  
Associated Press Writer  
OMAHA — For Robin Amerine, every coin or the Byron Reed collection is a story. And together they are history.

After decades in a bank vault, the nearly 14,000 coins, bank notes, documents and manuscripts collected by the Omaha real estate developer and his wife in the city nearly 100 years ago have found a home at Western Heritage Museum.

"I had never thought of coins as objects of history. I always thought of them as units of monetary exchange," said Amerine, curator of the Reed collection. "But they are so telling, so historically rich in information. The first time I held a 2,500-year-old coin in my hand I was hooked."

About 250 pieces of the collection, valued at up to \$15 million, are on display at the museum.

It is the first public display of the collection since 1955 when a robbery attempt prompted the city to move it from the public library to a bank vault.

Included in the collection are an 1804 silver dollar, rare because no silver dollars were minted in 1804, and numerous prototypes and patterns for U.S. coins that were never adopted, Amerine said.

The exhibit, which also includes famous autographs of George Washington and other early presidents, rare books and documents, will portray Reed's collection as historical artifacts, not just coins and documents alone.

"I know a lot of people are going to come out because of the price tag on the collection. What I hope they



AP Wirephoto

Curator Robin Amerine checks a \$500 bond issued by the Territory of Nebraska.

leave with is the sense of beauty of all these objects and their sense of history," Amerine said.

"It is not a collection on the history of money. It's a history of Omaha and the world as told by Reed's artifacts."

Born in Duran, N.Y., in 1829, Reed settled in Omaha in March 1856 after being driven from Kansas by pro-slavery forces over his reporting for

\$300 autographs he would later sell to the city along with about \$300,000 to build a library to house the artifacts.

"He collected not for the value of anything he collected. He collected because of the stories these objects could tell," Amerine said.

Records indicate that an agent purchased one of the collection's most distinctive pieces, the 1804 silver dollar, at an auction for \$272.

Amerine said the coin was minted in the 1800s to fill out proof sets that were given to various dignitaries. It is one of 15 1804 silver dollars known to exist.

True to Reed's will, the city built a library to house the collection. But Amerine said most didn't immediately appreciate the value of the artifacts.

"They tried to do a very good job taking care of it. They were very conscious at first with being blessed with this legacy," she said. "Nobody at the time had any idea what the coins and documents would be worth. Most of the documents were from his contemporaries."

Time and easy access before the collection was put into storage took their toll on the artifacts.

Amerine says the collection was in "astoundingly good" shape when the move to Western Heritage began. But she said some of the documents had deteriorated and there is evidence that some uncalculated gold coins were taken and replaced with more worn coins.

"It does seem apparent that there was some pilfering of the collection due to the easy access to it," she said.

By and large it's apparent that the people of Omaha had respect for what they had. I think in today's society there would not be a cent left given the storage conditions and the easy access."

The collection also survived a 1972 attempt by the Omaha Library Board to sell it for \$1 million. Public outcry prompted the Omaha City Council to halt the sale.

"The city has done very well with quite an unusual legacy."



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Congressional Record every six months.  
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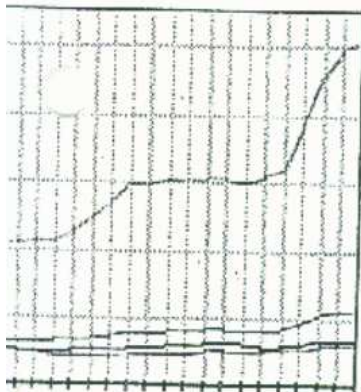
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# Reed cabinet exhibit to open March date is set

By Robert M. Lacewell

COIN WORLD Staff Writer

The famed Byron Reed collection, a multi-million dollar collection of rare coins, medals, paper money, books, manuscripts and autographs formed in the mid-19th century by the Omaha, Neb., pioneer realtor and business leader, will be placed on permanent exhibit at the Western Heritage Museum, Omaha's history museum, beginning in March.

The collection comprises more than 8,000 coins and medals, more than 2,000 notes; 1,836 books; 3,243 pamphlets and more than 800 autographs, including those of all U.S. presidents to the time of Reed's death in 1891. According to a museum press release, the estimated value of the collection, which is owned by the city of Omaha, approaches \$15 million.

Reed bequeathed the collection to the city of Omaha upon his death in 1891, along with most of the land on which the Omaha Public Library, the prior home for the collection, was built. Reed's will provided that the collection would go to the citizens of Omaha to be used and displayed for the benefit of the public.

According to Robin Amerine, curator of the collection at the museum, Reed attempted to collect specimens of all denominations and types of U.S. coins dated from 1792 till his death in 1891. She said Reed became interested in coins through his father, Alexander Reed, and inherited a small collection from him.

#### 1804 silver dollar

Highlighting the U.S. section of the collection is the Parmelee Specimen of the 1804 Draped Bust silver dollar, purchased by Reed in 1890. The coin is a Class I specimen, struck at the U.S. Mint in 1834-35. There are 15 known 1804 silver dollars, eight from the 1834-35 period and seven restrikes produced in 1859.

Other highlights include a Colonial New England shilling of 1652 and a 1796 Wyddelton token in copper. Later issues include: an 1823/2 Capped Bust quarter dollar; an 1841 Coronet quarter eagle; an 1875 \$3 gold piece; a 1795 Capped Bust, Small Eagle half eagle; a 1795 Capped Bust, Heraldic Eagle half eagle; an 1832 Capped Head, 12 Stars half eagle; and a 1798/7 Capped Bust, Seven Stars Left, Six Right eagle.

Please see REED Page 9



WESTERN HERITAGE MUSEUM: The project includes the overhaul of old Union Station, construction of a parking structure and addition of an indoor train display.

## City to Decide Which Coins to Sell

BY KYLL MACMILLAN  
WORLD HERALD STAFF WRITER

A portion of the City of Omaha's Byron Reed coin and document collection may be auctioned as early as November to raise \$3 million toward an \$18.9 million renovation and expansion of the Western Heritage Museum.

"This would be a major numismatic event for any of these materials to come up for sale," said Robert Hoge, curator of the Museum of the American Numismatic Association in Colorado Springs, Colo.

The city is working out details of how the materials would be sold and what objects in the century-old collection would be removed, said Ken

Bunger, assistant city attorney.

"There is definitely a market," he said. "That is not a problem."

The City Planning Board will consider the sale at its Wednesday meeting, Hunger said, and the matter could come before the City Council two to four weeks later.

What objects will be sold and who will conduct the auction could be considered by the City Council at the same time or later.

The Western Heritage Museum, 801 S. 16th St., houses the 16,000-piece collection. About 300 objects are on view on a rotating basis in a secured 5,000-square-foot exhibit that opened in April 1989.

The proceeds from the sale would constitute the city's contribution to-

ward the museum's \$18.9 million building plan, which includes the overhaul of old Union Station, construction of a parking structure and addition of an indoor train display.

The project also sets aside funds to upgrade the Byron Reed exhibit as well as its storage areas.

Speaking at press conference Thursday, Mayor Morgan said the benefits that would come from the building project justify the sale of parts of the Byron Reed collection.

"I think there is a greater value in making certain that we can use this facility to its maximum extent," he said.

Museums across the country, Hoge said, are facing similar decisions as

Please turn to Page 2, Col. 5

## City to Decide Which Coins To Be Sold for Museum Plan

Continued from Page 1

they try to expand in the face of funding shortfalls.

"In order to adequately care for collections," he said, "they have to be housed. Sometimes museums, if they don't have enough funding, get faced with a sacrifice situation."

Bunger offered a preliminary estimate that \$2 million would come from the sale of a portion of the coins, which he said are valued at \$8 million to \$10 million. Another \$1 million would come from selling some of the documents and books, which are valued at nearly \$2 million.

Four representatives of auction houses and dealers already have taken a preliminary look at the collection, Hunger said. Others will be brought in as bids are sought for overseeing the sale.

About a half dozen firms in the United States, Hoge said, have the expertise to conduct an auction of this scale.

Stressing that no decisions have been made, Hunger said objects will be sold that duplicate other pieces or are unrelated to the central thrusts of the collection.

He said nothing will be auctioned that is on display or that is directly

connected with Byron Reed and his family, Omaha, Nebraska or the Great Plains. The collection's 1804 silver dollar, one of only 15 known in the world, and the rare pattern coins, prototypes of coins never issued, will not be on the block.

"You wouldn't want to destroy the collection as a collection. You want to make sure that you've retained what makes his collection important. It's a difficult decision," Hunger said.

Byron Reed, an Omaha financier and real estate developer, died in 1891. Under the terms of his will, his collection of coins, medals, bank notes, books and manuscripts was bequeathed to the city.

The city loaned it to the Western Heritage Museum for 25 years under an agreement reached in 1986.

"It's a fantastic collection," Hoge said in an earlier interview, "and I don't think it's appreciated in Omaha as much as it should be. In some respects, it's far superior to what we have."

The group of early American coins in the collection is unsurpassed anywhere, Hoge said. And the group of pattern coins is on a par with that of the U.S. Mint collection at the Smithsonian Institution.



## Claim to Coins Challenged

A Douglas County Court judge heard arguments Friday involving a challenge to the City of Omaha's claim that it owns the Byron Reed collection and, therefore, can sell a portion to help pay for renovation work at the Western Heritage Museum.

Omaha attorney Horace H. Reynolds IV, 4925 Northwest Radial, is seeking to prevent the city from selling part of the Byron Reed collection.

Reynolds and Ken Bunger, an assistant city attorney, appeared Friday before Judge Stephen Swartz.

Reynolds filed a motion in February seeking an order to remove the city as trustee of the collection. Reynolds' motion also asks the court to name the Byron Reed Historical Society, or another party, as a substitute trustee.

Bunger said the judge heard arguments over whether the Douglas County Court has jurisdiction over the matter. He said Swartz took the matter under advisement.

*Date ?  
in 1994*



## Omaha to sell coin collection to aid museum restoration

OMAHA (AP) — Officials plan to sell a city-owned coin and document collection to help fund an \$18.9 million restoration project for the Western Heritage Museum.

The renovation project would transform the building into a state-of-the-art facility and put a renewed focus on the historic art-deco train station that houses it, museum officials said.

The project would be funded with \$15.9 million in private donations raised through the Heritage-Joslyn Foundation, which solicits contributions for the Western Heritage and Joslyn Art museums.

In addition, the city of Omaha has pledged \$3 million to the project, which would be raised by selling unexhibited objects from the 16,000-

piece Bryon Reed coin and document collection.

Mayor P.J. Morgan called the sale the right thing to do.

"I think there's a greater value making certain that we can use the facility to its maximum extent," Morgan said.



JEROME P. GROSSMAN

*The writer is an Omaha lawyer who was coordinator for the Byron Reed collection before it was given to the Western Heritage Museum.*

## 'Reed Collection Should Stay Intact'

The last will and testament of Byron Reed gave the land on which was built the former Omaha Public Library at 19th and Harney Streets to the City of Omaha to house his collection. The gift was not to take effect until the building was completed and ready to receive the collection. Otherwise the gift was void.

The will said that once the gift was effective, "then said library and collection shall be placed in said building and forever thereafter be used and displayed for the benefit of the public under such reasonable rules and regulations as may be provided therefore by the City of Omaha."

An ordinance was enacted to accept the gift. Ordinance 2927 of Dec. 8, 1891, stated the exact language of the Reed will and further declared: "The same is hereby accepted by the City of Omaha upon the terms and conditions ... expressed (in the will) ... " The will was reproduced in full as a preamble to the ordinance.

The ordinance, to my knowledge, has never been repealed, and the action of selling part or all of the collection should be considered a violation of the ordinance and of the trust it imposed.

The will and the ordinance go on to describe the entire collection. More pertinent, the will mentions that the "duplicates" that have been referred to as potential items for sale were

removed from the collection and distributed to Byron Reed's heirs at the time the will was probated. Therefore, the probability exists that no duplicates remain of the original collection.

The definition of "duplicates" may be considered by the uninformed to include varieties which should not be considered as duplicates and may vary in nature and value considerably.

Certainly the "experts" who come to bid on the collection will be looking for 1) value and 2) salability far more than for what should be retained for the benefit of the public.

The sale of the patterns or any of them would destroy the prestige of the collection. The sale of the historical coins or part of them would greatly diminish the educational value of the collection.

It certainly is a no-win situation, either in fact badly hurting the collection as far as the public is concerned or diminishing the value of the collection as a unit.

The sale of large portions of the autographs, books, documents and other remaining portions of the collection beyond the coins would again badly damage the prestige of the collection, especially its educational and tourism value.

It is my impression that the Byron Reed collection is by far the most

important display of the Western Heritage Museum. Therefore, the sale of all or any part of the collection would also adversely affect the museum's prestige and relegate it to the status of a local museum with purely local interest.

I have opposed the sale of the collection or any part of it since at least 1973 and as coordinator of the collection prior to its being housed in the Western Heritage Museum. My opinion has not changed. However, to fight the City of Omaha, the City Council and the Western Heritage Museum would be a costly and lengthy legal battle and pose serious problems.

I believe the salvation of the Byron Reed collection rests with the City of Omaha. Its reaction to the sale of a priceless treasure to correct a parking lot or building problem is at variance with the original wishes of the donor, Byron Reed, as well as with the education of the citizens of Omaha and their children. It is certainly a deterrent to any collector who might consider leaving all or part of his or her collection for such an ultimate reason and disposal.

### BILL TAMMEUS

■ "Education and training are the keys to opportunity for every American," says President Clinton. Yes, but it still doesn't hurt to be born a Rockefeller or Kennedy.



## Byron Reed Collection

Highlights of the Byron Reed collection, with estimates of value provided by national experts.

1. 1804 silver dollar (15 known). One sold at a 1989 auction for \$990,000.
2. 1838 proof gold \$5 half-eagle (possibly unique), \$75,000-\$200,000.
3. 1878 copper pattern for \$50 gold half-union (about a dozen known), \$40,000-\$50,000.
4. 1797 silver half-dollar, \$40,000-\$50,000.
5. 1829 gold \$5 half-eagle (two in collection), \$50,000-\$100,000 each.
6. 1832 12-star \$5 gold half-eagle (one of about six known), \$75,000.
7. 1875 set, proof gold coins in denominations of \$2½, \$3, \$5, \$10; \$40,000 to \$150,000 each.
8. 1786 George Washington letter to Patrick Henry, \$15,000.
10. 1775 letter from one Revolutionary War general to another before the Battle of Saratoga, \$5,000.

## Reed Collection Attracts Auction Firms' Attention

BY KYLE MACMILLAN  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

When a 19th century Omaha real-estate developer purchased a coveted 1804 silver dollar at the landmark sale of the Parmelee collection in 1890, he assured his own place in the annals of coin collecting.

Byron Reed's coin collection, which he bequeathed to the City of Omaha upon his death in 1891, is one of the most storied in the United States.

Paul Song, a vice president at Sotheby's auction house in New York City, calls the Reed set of American coins among the most important in public hands in the country.

Other national experts say the Reed collection is overrated. Along with examples of rare and unique coins such as the 1804 silver dollar — known in coin circles as the "King of American Coins" — many other coins in the collection are merely ordinary, the experts say.

"The collection is important for certain things it contains," said Harvey Stack, a partner at Stack's of New York City. "It is not necessarily important as a total entity."

City of Omaha officials have proposed the sale of \$3 million worth of the collection's 16,000 coins, medals, paper money, books and manuscripts. The proceeds would constitute the city's contribution toward an \$18.9 million expansion and renovation of the Western Heritage Museum, which houses the collection.

The sale, along with the rest of the renovation and expansion project, is subject to approval by the City Council. City and museum officials hope to submit plans to the council in several weeks.

If the project is approved, city officials will seek bids from at least six auction houses with experience in sales of this scope. Each will be asked to spell out how it would conduct the sale and what would be sold to reach the necessary \$3 million.

Experts from four of those firms, who have visited Omaha and examined the collection, were interviewed for this story.

The collection contains hundreds of books and documents, but they are considerably less important than Reed's

coins, said Selby Kitter, a vice president at Sotheby's.

The books, he said, were not acquired to build a collection but were the kind of library that a man of Reed's standing and means would have had in the 19th century.

The books and documents have been valued at \$2 million, which Kitter calls the "upper end of the ballpark."

The fame of Reed's collection resides in the coins, which New York City coin expert Richard G. Doty appraised at \$5.9 million in March 1986. Richard Bagg, director of auctions for Auctions by Bowers and Merena in Wolfeboro, N.H., estimates its value at \$6 million to \$8 million today.

In a coin market where collections have been sold for as much as \$40 million, the experts say that its overall value is significant but far from record-setting.

"All serious collectors have heard of Byron Reed," said James Lamb, a vice president at Christie's auction house in New York City.

Many collectors, Bagg said, would love to have a coin from the Reed collection, whether it were worth a few dollars or a few thousand dollars. He said the collectors probably would pay a premium of 10 percent to 20 percent to get a Reed coin.

A lore has grown up around the collection, Stack said, because it was one of the few important collections on public view earlier this century when researchers wrote some of the early reference books on coins.

But the collection's reputation, Stack said, is not entirely borne out by what it contains and, sometimes more important, by what it does not contain.

Reed did not build the collection in the systematic, focused way that characterizes serious collectors today. Bagg describes it more as an accumulation than a collection.

Along with coins worth tens of thousands of dollars are thousands of others that can be found in ordinary collections all over the world.

In many areas, Lamb said, the collection is patchy. A particular group within the collection might contain some outstanding pieces, but there are often much better groups as a whole elsewhere.



## The BYRON REED ROOM at Western Heritage

The Reed Room was opened in April of 1989 with a \$100-a-plate formal dinner. The Kiewit Foundation provided \$750,000 to give this 100 year-old collection, owned by the City of Omaha, its deserved resting place. However, after just a few years, there was discontent. The room was dim, and the displays didn't change. There wasn't a special curator. Ninety percent of the items were in storage in a room below. There wasn't enough personnel to guide researchers. The museum had to spend \$80,000 a year for a special guard for the public viewing room.

SOLUTION?? (1) Transfer approximately 100 Omaha and 30 Nebraska items to the Library-Archives of the Historical Society of Douglas County. (2) Offer the States of Kansas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, etc. items relating to them. (3) Sell the items on the "Could Be Sold" list. (4) Use the proceeds for the enhancement of the remainder of the collection.

ENHANCEMENT?? (1) Change displays every 3 to 6 months. (2) Feature timely events - A. Presidents' birthdays. B. Fourth of July C. Constitution Day. D. Veterans Day (3) Feature large drawings of today's moneys and the manuscripts the Reed Collection has - Perry with Abe Lincoln; Nickle with Thomas Jefferson, Quarter with George Washington. The same with today's currency. There are many other themes that could be developed.

### ----- OTHER INFORMATION

The coins and letters were displayed for the first time about 1894 at the new downtown library at 19th & Harney. They had their own room on the 3rd floor with pull-out glass panels for the letters and horizontal snow cases for the coins. All went well until the 1940s when the coins had increased in value and attempts were made to steal them. As a result, the coins were moved to a bank vault and not seen again until 1989 at Western Heritage. The letters remained at the library.

In the 1960s, the American Numismatic Society wanted to build their national headquarters in Omaha and include the Reed coin collection. Their site was just north of the Joslyn Art Museum. The City of Omaha turned down their request because there was supposed to be a street left open for the Fire Department to serve Central High School. As of today's world, the street area was filled in with Joslyn's expansion.

When the downtown library moved to 14th Street, the books and manuscripts went along. They had their own area and good security, but no one knew about them. They were not listed in the general catalog or a national computer net work. No one knows much about them at Western Heritage, either, for the same reasons.

The City of Omaha via Mayor Morgan agreed to contribute \$3,000,000 for the construction of a new parking facility on the north side of Western Heritage. The Mayor decided that this amount of money would come from the sale of some of the items in the Byron Reed Collection. The items pertaining to Washington would be good to sell because of their



high value and that they don't involve Omaha and Nebraska history. In the next few weeks, the Omaha City Council will decide about the sale. They open their meetings with a Pledge of Allegiance to Our Flag, a very moving gesture! On the other hand, will they sell George Washington down the river just because he crossed the Delaware and not the Missouri?

Kathleen Best, August 30, 1994



## BUSINESS, 13

~~WED~~ Tuesday  
Sept. 6, 1994



**Michael  
Kelly**

## 'Alll Aboard!' Shouted Again

Howard Leslie stood under the 64-foot-high ceiling of the art deco main waiting room at the former Union Station in Omaha, not even blinking when someone asked him to show how passengers were called to a train.

Just like in the olden days.

Leslie, who in 1971 padlocked the building the night the last Union Pacific passenger train dropped off its final customers there, gathered himself for a few moments last week before announcing a departure.

In a strong, unhurried voice, the words resonating and echoing off the marble walls, Leslie then enunciated each syllable crisply and distinctly, not stumbling even once.

For a few moments, you could picture the old depot in its heyday, bustling with arriving and departing passengers.

"Your attention, please!" Leslie called. "Union Pacific going west. Train number one-oh-one. Streamliner, City of San Francisco. Now loading at gate number two. For Columbus, Grand Island, North Platte, Cheyenne, Rock Springs, Ogden, Salt Lake, Reno, San Francisco. We will leave on track number two."

He paused and then gave the old-time train call, drawing out the first word for three seconds and clipping the ending of the second word as his pitch rose: "Alll A-board!"

He laughed, and fellow retiree Dudley Bobbitt congratulated him: "Didn't even need a PA system."

Leslie, 77, Bobbitt, 79, and Missouri Pacific retiree Leo Wilkins, 84, were escorted through the building by officials of the Heritage-Joslyn Foundation, which solicits contributions for the Joslyn Art Museum and the Western Heritage Museum — housed at the old train station.

## Help Needed

Daniel Koenig, the foundation's director of development, said architects planning the \$18.9 million restoration and expansion of the museum at the station need help from the people who once worked there.

For example, he said, Leslie probably will be asked to make a tape of the impromptu train call that he gave last week. Visitors to the museum would be able to push a button and hear it.

The museum opened in the 1970s, and many repairs were made to the building. The old baggage area on the ground floor has featured a walk-through history of Omaha for years, including an old-time classroom and a trolley car.

Wilkins, who operated trolleys from 1942 to 1952, recognized the restored car, No. 1014, as one that, he said, he ran for probably 100,000 miles.

Wilkins was on hand for the 1931 opening of the Union Station. Leslie and Bobbitt were there the night it closed.

"Three passengers got off," said Bobbitt, whose navy-blue Union Pacific uniform hangs in the museum. "We went around and quietly closed the doors. It was just like death itself."

"I had sent so many people out on trips. I just couldn't keep the tears back. It was just the end of an era."

The museum is hoping for the start of a new era, paid for with \$15.9 million raised through the Heritage-Joslyn Foundation and \$3 million from the City of Omaha.

Being debated is a city proposal to sell part of the century-old, city-owned Byron Reed coin and document collection, partly displayed at the museum, to raise the city's share.

## Restoration

Leslie arrived to work at the station Aug. 20, 1935. He said he was paid \$1.26 a day, plus tips, as a redeap.

Except for three years with an artillery unit in World War II, he worked at the station until it closed.

Last week he walked through the old USO room, where soldiers played table tennis while waiting. He showed off the former dispensary and his corner office — where, he was told, an overhead light fixture fell last year.

The retirees walked trackside among weeds, where a U.P. engine, sleeper car and caboose await restoration.

Work at the building would begin this fall, with completion expected in the summer of 1996. Officials say museum visitations would climb from 60,000 a year today to about 100,000.

Backers say the museum, which preserves more than 50,000 objects and more than a million photographs, would add hands-on, interactive exhibits. The building's location near the popular Old Market, they say, makes it a natural for increased usage.

What's also important, they say, are the thousands of stories waiting to be told. In its prime, which didn't last long, Union Station was just about the busiest place in Omaha.

"It was a wonderful building," Wilkins said in the main waiting room. "It's nice to walk into this room, but no one is here, not like they used to be. That really kind of gets to you."



# Nearly Half in W-H Poll Favored Reed Coin Sale

BY JENA JANOVY

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Nearly half of Omahans surveyed in a World-Herald Poll favored the City of Omaha's proposal to sell part of the Byron Reed collection to help pay for renovation work at the Western Heritage Museum.

In a plan that has stirred some controversy, the city has proposed the sale of \$3 million worth of the collection's 16,000 coins, medals, paper money, books and manuscripts. The proceeds would constitute the city's share of an \$18.9 million planned expansion and renovation of the museum, which houses the collection.

The City Council will hold a public hearing on the museum's redevelopment plan, which includes the proposed sale, at its 2 p.m. meeting today in the legislative chambers of the City-County Building, 1819 Farnam St.

A World-Herald Poll indicated that 48 percent of those surveyed said they would favor selling a portion of the collection to raise money for the museum renovation, and 40 percent said they would not.

## World-Herald POLL

### Sell Part of Byron Reed Collection?

For	48%
Against	40%
Don't Know / Refused	12%

Source: The Gallup Organization  
Statistical margin of error  $\pm$  6 percentage points

Twelve percent said they didn't know or declined to answer.

The telephone survey of 326 Omahans who said they were registered voters was conducted Sept. 6, 7 and 8 for The World-Herald by the Gallup Organization of Princeton, N.J.

The statistical margin of error was plus or minus 6 percentage points.

In addition to the \$3 million contribution, the city is seeking private donors.

Please turn to Page 8, Col. 1

4-94?



# Nearly Half in Poll Backed Coin Sale

Continued from Page 1

ted by the city through the sale of part of the collection, the renovation project would be financed with \$15.9 million in private donations raised through the Heritage-Joslyn Foundation, which solicits contributions for Western Heritage and Joslyn Art Museums.

The city also has pledged an additional \$3 million to the museum — \$300,000 annually for the next 10 years. That figure represents an increase of \$125,000 over the \$175,000 the museum receives each year from the city for repairs and maintenance.

The proposed renovation includes the overhaul of old Union Station, which houses the museum, construction of a \$3.9 million parking structure north of the building and addition of an indoor train display. The project also sets aside funds to upgrade the Byron Reed exhibit.

Many of the existing exhibits would be refurbished, and several new exhibits would be added, including a 28,000-square-foot railroad exhibit that would

feature six train cars from various eras.

Byron Reed, an Omaha financier and real estate developer who died in 1891, specified in his will that the collection he had gathered was to be "used and displayed for the benefit of the public."

The proposed sale of part of the collection has sparked some controversy since Mayor Morgan announced the plan last May.

Robert Best, Reed's great-grandson, has said that the sale of part of the collection would harm the integrity of the entire collection.

Some coin experts have said, however, that selling \$3 million of coins and documents would not destroy the integrity of the collection and that the sale would, in fact, enhance the collection's educational value.

The Morgan administration has pushed for the sale.

"I believe selling that part of the coins that are not on display, that are not preserved in the proper manner is the right thing for us to do," Morgan said.

The current Reed exhibit presents about 300 coins in a display that loosely ties the coins and documents to world history.

City Finance Director William McKell said that if the council approves the museum redevelopment plan, the coins and other items probably would be auctioned off next spring.

If the project is approved, city officials will seek bids from at least six auction houses with experience in sales of this scope. Each will be asked to spell out how it would conduct the sale and what would be sold.

The question:

"The City of Omaha is planning to provide \$3 million as part of the \$19 million renovation and expansion of Western Heritage Museum. In order to raise the money, the city might sell part of the Byron Reed coin collection that is housed at the museum. Would you favor or oppose selling a portion of this collection as a way to raise money for the museum?"

9-94



usually with ...

6WH 9/19/94

## City Council Holds Key to Better Museum

Omaha's Western Heritage Museum has made significant strides in recent years. It is rich in potential. But it needs help from the City Council. The museum's redevelopment plan, which comes up for council approval Tuesday, deserves support.

The plan involves \$18.9 million in restoration, renovation and expansion. The city's contribution would consist of \$300,000 in each of the next 10 years and an estimated \$3 million from the sale of items from the Byron Reed collection. Curators said the sale would involve only items that are incidental to the main body of the 16,000-piece collection of coins, books and documents.

The museum is situated in the old Union Station on 10th Street near the Old Market. The striking art deco building provides adequate space for a history museum. But its wiring, heating and air-conditioning systems need to be replaced. Its parking deck was closed in 1992 because of structural problems.

The redevelopment plan would provide the opportunity to move ahead. The parking garage would be rebuilt and enlarged. The renovated museum would have a significant display on railroads, which have been neglected in previous displays. It would include six restored railroad cars from various eras.

The remaining elements of the Reed collection could be preserved and displayed more professionally.

When the council votes on the redevelopment resolution, it will not be making a specific decision on what should be sold from the Reed collection. Auction houses will be asked for recommendations on enhancing the integrity of the collection. This is a reasonable approach that should keep intact the spirit of Byron Reed's legacy to the people of Omaha.

If council members agree, the museum could become a stronger link in the chain of tourist sites that runs from the Gene Leahy Mall and the Old Market to Rosenblatt Stadium and Henry Doorly Zoo. Its renewal could encourage other improvements in the neighborhood.

Museum Director Phillip Kwiatkowski has suggested that a renovated Western Heritage could become one of the city's first stops for tourists, increasing attendance from 65,000 last year to 175,000 annually. He suggested that the modernization of the facility and its exhibits, creating a more interactive and educational style for the museum, could catapult Western Heritage into the front ranks of history museums regionally.

Museum officials have pledged to raise \$15.9 million to supplement city funds. But much hinges on the City Council's action. Tuesday will be a crucial day for the museum. We urge members of the City Council to consider what the museum could become with their help. Consider the possibilities and then vote to make it happen.



Omaha World-Herald

# Midlands News

Wednesday, September 21, 1994 Page 17

## Byron Reed Collection

BY JENA JANOVY  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

A portion of the Byron Reed collection, which includes coins, documents and other materials, will be auctioned off by the City of Omaha to help pay for renovation work at the Western Heritage Museum.

The City Council approved a resolution Tuesday that accepts a museum plan calling for the sale of \$3 million worth of the collection's 16,000 coins, medals, paper money, books and manuscripts. The proceeds will constitute the city's share of an \$18.9 million planned expansion and renovation of the museum, which houses the collection.

The approval followed more than two hours of public testimony and council

discussion about the sale plan, which has drawn criticism from the family of Byron Reed and local coin collectors.

Robert Best, a great-grandson of Reed's, and Best's wife, Kathleen, urged the council to resist selling a portion of the collection simply to meet the museum's short-term financial needs. Reading from his great-grandfather's will, Best reminded the council that Byron Reed specified that the collection was to "be used and displayed for the benefit of the public."

Best said he did not want the proceeds from the sale to be used to build an improved parking structure.

Other opponents, including Anne Boyle, wife of former Mayor Mike Boyle, said the collection represents an impor-

tant part of the city's history and should be preserved in its entirety. Opponents also raised concerns that the city would sell the most valuable portions of the Reed collection to guarantee that the entire \$3 million would be raised.

Several supporters of the plan spoke, including Western Heritage Museum Director Phillip Kwiatkowski, a representative of Downtown Omaha Inc. and the Old Market Business Association, and a national coin and collection expert. They said that the money from the sale would enable the museum to increase attendance, improve displays, enhance educational opportunities and provide more interactive displays.

The sale, they said, also would allow the city to improve the display of the

Reed collection areas.

In addition to the renovation with \$15.9 million raised through the Foundation.

The city's \$3 million annually figure represents the cost of repairs and

The project overhaul of 10th St., which also includes



# nds News

y, September 21, 1994 Page 17

## Collection Sale OK'd

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The sale, they said, also would allow the city to improve the display of the

Reed collection and upgrade its storage areas.

In addition to the \$3 million contributed by the city from the coin sale, the renovation project would be financed with \$15.9 million in private donations raised through the Heritage-Joslyn Foundation.

The city also has pledged an additional \$3 million to the museum — \$300,000 annually for the next 10 years. That figure represents an increase of \$125,000 over the \$175,000 the museum now receives each year from the city for repairs and maintenance.

The proposed renovation includes the overhaul of old Union Station at 810 S. 10th St., which houses the museum. It also includes construction of a \$3.9

million parking structure north of the building and addition of an indoor train display.

The council approved the plan 5-1 with an amendment proposed by Councilman Richard Takechi. The amendment calls for the \$3 million to come from the sale of a portion of the Reed collection "or other city funds if available." The amendment also commits the city to consulting with the Byron Reed committee, among others, during the auction procedures. The auction is expected to occur next spring.

Councilman Frank Christensen voted against it. Councilwoman Brenda Council, an attorney for Union Pacific, abstained from voting. She said she wanted to avoid a perceived conflict.



### CHRISTIE'S PROPOSED SALE LIST

A member of the Omaha City Legal Department has stated that nothing is binding unless it is stated in a legal document. Thus, what a newspaper prints is not to be considered accurate. This means that official statements in regard to the disposition of the Reed Collection are not to be believed. The public was told that nothing on display in the Collection would be sold. Yet, 51% of the items are on Christie's sale list.

A very important object from the Reed Room that is to be sold is George Washington's distillery ledger kept by Tobias Lear and signed by Washington. This was appraised at \$10,000 when it was turned over to Western Heritage in 1989. Christie's believes it might go for much more in the auction.

Instead, this Washington ledger should go to Mount Vernon which has been commissioned by the State of Virginia to resurrect the distillery. Recent diggings have uncovered the foundation, so the records in the ledger would be extremely helpful.

The Mount Vernon Association has offered to buy the book directly from the City of Omaha for \$15,000. Of this amount, \$5,000 would be donated by a patriotic Omaha couple. It would be a tribute to Byron Reed to have this item go directly to Mount Vernon.

There is something else to ponder on the binding power of mere statements. For years, the Reed collection has been described, in print, as containing the autographs of all of the Presidents through Cleveland and all but six of the Signers. However, the Christie list breaks up these Reed assemblages by taking seven Presidents and two Signers.

Are the officials of the City of Omaha really this unpatriotic? Aren't they moved by George Washington's statement, "If, to please the people, we offer what we ourselves disapprove, how can we afterward defend our work?"



I am not here as a representative of the Reed family, but as a representative of the people of the City of Omaha. We should not be denied the presence of the history-makers in the Reed collection of books and manuscripts.

In addition to the autographs of all of the Presidents from Washington to Cleveland and all but six Signers of the Declaration of Independence, there's a wide selection of notables from the United States and Europe, some of the items are 500 years old. Among the books, we have Christopher Columbus' personal narrative translated from Spanish in 1827. There's the Journal of the Last Voyage of LaSalle to Find the Mouth of the Mississippi, written in 1714, and we have a 1791 copy of Thomas Paine's Common Sense in which he wrote "These are the times that try men's souls". Today, in this room, is also a time that is trying men's souls.

I saw the book and manuscript collection for the first time in 1967 and have spent the last 28 years keeping track of it. I was very pleased when it was moved to Western Heritage in 1969. The event made the cover of the World-Herald's MAGAZINE OF THE MIDLANDS. A museum ~~was quoted in this~~ spokesman said, "This collection is a tremendous thing for Omaha, something the city and state should really be proud of." ~~Said at this time~~ However, because of the lack of a specialized curator-librarian, the whole collection has not been utilized. The public did not have access to a catalog and a supervised study area was not available.

Now, with the \$300,000 a year that the City will be giving Western Heritage, there will be funds to hire specialists for the collection. Another source of help would be the new Gerald Ford Conservation Center to open in Omaha this year. The Ford benefactor, James Paxson, was the Byron Reed of this century -- he, too, wanted to give his fellow Omahans a touch of history.

I would also like to mention that it is my understanding that your only obligation to the Union Station Building is to reinstate the parking plaza to a useable condition. This would be just the one level as it was in the beginning. The City is not obligated to pay for a lower level. I would suggest, therefore, that the cost might not be as high as \$3,000,000, so you wouldn't be obligated for that high an amount.

In conclusion, may I remind you that our free lives of today are a result of the past. Because of the efforts of our Founding Fathers, my great-grandparents left Europe in 1870 for a better life in this country. Perhaps I can pay my dues to those of the past by imploring you not to take away from future generations what is now in our present -- the Byron Reed Collection.

Spoken at OMAHA CITY COUNCIL MEETING, January 31, 1995

by Kathleen Best



## Action Plan

The City Council, which last summer passed a resolution of intent to sell part of the collection, is holding a public hearing today on a proposed ordinance to put the plan into action.

The \$3 million to be raised would be the city's share of an \$18.9 million renovation plan for the museum. The rest is to come from money raised by the Heritage-Joslyn Foundation.

The Reed collection, by all accounts, is one of the most storied in the United States. Its books and documents — including letters from Mark Twain, Charles Dickens and many presidents, as well as signatures of 50 signers of the Declaration of Independence — have been valued at \$2 million.

A New York City appraiser valued the coins, including 4,500 ancient and foreign coins, at \$5.9 million in 1986. Vescio says the value could be much higher.

Charles Raffensperger, interim executive director of the museum, said he hopes the auction is approved.

"It appears to be the only logical way to get money to help us renovate the museum and, specifically, the collection," he said.

Auction or not, let's hope that the Byron Reed Collection becomes known to more and more Omahans.

Bob Best, who first saw the collection as a boy, hopes it remains intact.

"There isn't anything like this anywhere in the country," he said. "This can't be duplicated by anyone."

## High Security

The Reed coins, if stored that way, would make the world's most unusual piggy bank. But many, including those from the period before Christ, are on display in a high-security area.

In its own case is the collection's "Hope Diamond," the 1804 silver dollar. In 1989, such a coin sold for \$990,000.

Reed lies today, as he has since 1891, on a sloping hillside in Prospect Hill Cemetery along with many others whose names live on as streets, avenues or, as in Byron Reed's case, a real estate firm.

Visitors to the collection can push a button and listen to a greeting from Reed. An actor's face is projected onto a mannequin, wearing a 19th-century suit and standing in a reconstruction of Reed's library.

"Welcome to my exhibit," the voice says. "I'm very pleased that the people of Omaha are finally able to see it again."

William Vescio, a pharmacist and longtime coin collector, said Omaha never has exhibited more than 1 percent of the collection.

"I know they can't display it all," he said. "The sad part is that a lot of Omahans don't know what we have because it's been hidden for so long. If the citizens of Omaha knew what we have here, they would be shocked."

Robert Vassell, a Metro Community College instructor, said it could be "a major repository for scholars from all over the world."

Vassell said: "People should have access to the collection. It shouldn't be in the catacombs of the Western Heritage."

Vescio, who successfully helped fight a proposal to sell part of the collection for \$1 million in 1970, said selling part today would amount to cannibalization.



Michael Kelly

## Collection No 'Piggy Bank'

Bob Best was a seventh-grader when he asked to be let in to the downtown public library's collection that he had heard so much about from his mother.

"I identified myself," he recalled, "and the people there very graciously escorted me to the third floor, northeast corner. It wasn't really open to the public. You had to have some reason to be there."

Best had a reason. He was a great-grandson of one of Omaha's founders, Byron Reed, who had bequeathed his famous collection of coins and papers to the city. The boy's first view made a vivid, lifelong impression.

"I was impressed by the magnitude of it all, by its significance," Best said Monday. "And I would be just as interested in it today if I had no relationship to the man who gave it to the city."

Best is a retired businessman. That first visit to the Byron Reed Collection was in 1936. And although school classes used to view the collection, for long stretches it has been out of sight.

After a break-in attempt in the mid-1960s, the fabulous Reed collection was consigned to a bank vault. The coins and papers later moved to the W. Dale Clark Public Library, built in the mid-1970s, and since 1989 have been housed at the Western Heritage Museum.

As it has in the past, the treasure again is the focal point of controversy. To help pay for renovation of the museum in the old Union Station, the plan is to raise \$3 million by auctioning part of the 16,000-piece collection.

Best and his wife, Kathleen, who have helped catalog the Reed collection, are among a group hoping to persuade the City Council to call off the auction.

"We have no quarrel with the renovation," Best said. "It's using the collection as a piggy bank that we object to."



## A Message from the Heritage-Joslyn Foundation



Built in 1931 and housed in the old Union Station in the heart of downtown Omaha, Nebraska, the Western Reserve Heritage Museum serves as a lively, interactive history museum which provides visitors a unique look at the history of Omaha and the Midwest region.

The Museum recently celebrated two major milestones, its 20th anniversary and the reopening of the Museum following completion of phase I of a \$29.5 million renovation, expansion and endowment campaign. The newly renovated facility has transformed the building back to the grandeur experienced during the heyday of the railroad. The goal is to place the Western Heritage Museum at the historical and cultural center of the city.

Part of the new improvement to the Museum included the relocation of the Union Pacific Museum to the Western Heritage Museum. The new enclosed addition to the track level of the building is now home to the collections of Union Pacific and its major impact on Omaha and the Western United States.

As with all museums, the exhibits and programs are truly the heart of the institution. The new Museum is redesigning and rebuilding the permanent Omaha exhibits to better display the unique heritage of this community. Exhibits are being organized around major themes such as the Land, the Community, Home and Family Life and Omaha at Work. The subjects are intended to portray how this community developed and to relate history to the lives of people today.

When completed in 1998, the Museum will include new education classrooms, a visitor orientation



exhibit, historical galleries, the enclosed Union Pacific train exhibit, a photo gallery, a shipping and receiving area, modernized elevators and restrooms, new administrative offices, The Byron Reed coin collection, a renovated museum shop and an authentic 1940's soda fountain. The newly renovated and expanded facility will greatly impact the effectiveness and delivery of the Museum's mission.

Future exhibits are also being planned to carry the Museum into the nearest generation. The acquisition and production of simulators that will allow the visitor to ride through "The Omaha Experience"; a video-based exhibit that will carry the visitor through Omaha from 1854 to the present.

Prior to the renovation project, over 20,000 children were served by programs offered at Western Heritage Museum. Another 8,000 participated in the Museum's outreach programs and thousands more participated in special events and family activities. While these numbers are good, they are expected to reach 60,000 school children annually and over 250,000 total annual attendance at the conclusion of the renovation project.

While the building is complete and over \$21 million has been raised toward the \$29.5 million campaign goal, there still is a long way to go. The money received through the sale of a portion of the Byron Reed Coin Collection will provide the impetus for Phase II of the campaign. When complete, the Western Heritage Museum will be the jewel in the crown of Omaha.



DECEMBER 20 TO JANUARY 3, 1996 • ENTERTAINMENT & DINING GUIDE ENCLOSED • PUBLISHED EVERY OTHER WEDNESDAY

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THE NEWS AND ENTERTAINMENT NEWSPAPER OF OMAHA & LINCOLN

# the Reader

## THE GUTTING OF BYRON REED

HOW THE CITY  
IS PLANNING TO  
PROFIT ILLEGALLY  
FROM YOUR  
UNCATALOGUED  
COLLECTION

THE READER'S SECOND ANNUAL HOLIDAY SHOPPING GUIDE



# OMAHA SYMPHONY

Victor Yampolsky, Music Director  
Ernest Richardson, Resident Conductor

## SYMPHONY



Jan. 11 & 13

Bruce Hagen,  
Conductor

Gail Williams,  
Horn

Gershwin  
Ravel  
Strauss  
Dvorak

Cuban Overture  
Mother Goose Suite  
Horn Concerto No. 1  
Symphony No. 8

8:00 p.m.  
Orpheum Theater

sponsored by The Western Aquila Hotel & The Pub Village

## SUPERPOPS



Banu Gibson  
and the  
New Orleans  
Hot Jazz

Ernest Richardson,  
Conductor

Jan. 18, 19 & 20

It's Cold Outside,  
but the Music's HOT!

Beat the winter chill with the best of Cole Porter,  
the Gershwin, and Irving Berlin teamed with  
the classic jazz of Duke Ellington, Honky  
Carmichael, and Fats Waller!

7:30 pm Thursday  
8:00 pm Friday & Saturday  
Orpheum Theater

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## COVER STORY

### THE GUTTING OF BYRON REED: How The City Is Planning To

It was given to the residents of Omaha with the noblest of purposes and the best of intentions. It's a valuable resource that for 105 years the city has never valued or protected. And now the gutting of this premiere resource, the Byron Reed Collection, has quietly begun. The city plans to sell the collection, valued by some experts at more than \$12 million.

The collection is "one of the world's finest treasures," "one of the United States' greatest collections... on par with the Smithsonian," and certainly "the most amazing treasure ever lost to scholarship," say experts. What makes its dismantling and loss all the more shameful is that this heirloom belongs to the residents of Omaha, and they're not being given any say about what is legally and rightfully theirs.

When Byron Reed died in 1891, he bequeathed an unusual and extensive coin and manuscript collection to the City of Omaha - should it want and accept it. Inherited from his father, Reed had added to the collection with fervor and as his wealth allowed.

Under his direction, New York agents were kept busy combing the world for historical treasures until the collection grew to an astounding 6,869 coins, 1,280 medals, 832 autographs, 1,836 books, 3,243 pamphlets, 615 Confederate notes and 2,135 bank notes, all then appraised at \$75,000. If the gift to the city was accepted, Byron Reed's estate would also provide land for construction of a public library for the appropriate display of the collection.

Reed's intent for his collection was specifically outlined in his will. The enjoyment and education of present and future generations would be permanently ensured as the collection was bequeathed "wholly in the interest and for the benefit of the public" with no provision made for the sale, exchange or purchase of items. Reed stipulated that "no parts thereof were to be removed."

The city accepted Reed's generous gift and agreed to meet all his conditions. It has been a contract and a trust many times broken - a scandalous yarn spinning out over 105 years of greed, theft and political mismanagement whose machinations are now moving into the realm of unethical and questionable legalities as the city prepares to gut the collection.

"Omaha has mismanaged the collection from the get-go," said Gloria Owen, an area numismatist, or coin collector. "They've never appreciated its rarity, beauty or educational and historical value."

The historical significance of the Byron Reed Collection can't be understated. More than 3,500 of the coins date back 2,000 and more years to Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, to Antiochus, Ptolemy, Herod and Pontius Pilate. One thousand coins date from the Roman, Greek and Byzantine empires. Also in the collection are the stuff of childhood tales and pirate legends: shillings, gold sovereigns, 25 types of widow's mite and

gold doubloons.

One-fourth of the collection is U.S. coins, including coin sets of each year from 1793-1890. The nation's history can be traced through fractional pieces, territorial monies and Confederate dollars. Yet numismatists must cherish the 400 U.S. pattern pieces that form the heart of the collection. Of special interest is the uncirculated 1864 Parmelee silver dollar - only 13 exist in the world, with Omaha's the most perfect specimen. It is for these reasons Reed's Collection is considered one of the top three numismatic collections in the nation and of having the best U.S. pattern collection in the world.

"The group of early American coins in the collection is unsurpassed anywhere. The group of pattern coins is on a par with that of the U.S. Mint collection at the Smithsonian Institution," said Robert Hoge, curator of the Museum of the American Numismatic Association in Colorado Springs, Col.

The manuscripts are no less remarkable. World history comes alive in documents, certificates, poems and letters from Napoleon, Charles Dickens, Lewis & Clark, Benedict Arnold, Beethoven, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mark Twain, Henry VIII and many others. Included are the signatures of every president up to the time of Reed's death (Washington to Cleveland) and all but six signers of the Declaration of Independence.

Dr. Eugene DeGruen, Pittsburgh State University's Curator of Special Collections, considers the Byron Reed Collection to be "one of academia's most important sources."

"Autograph-collecting was in vogue in Byron Reed's time, but people would usually cut away the signature and dispose of the manuscript," he said.

It is because Byron Reed kept the documents intact that we can view such items as Columbus' personal narrative, George Washington's whiskey ledger and La Salle's journal about discovering the mouth of the Mississippi River.

"Reed's thousands of manuscripts are literally additional puzzle pieces of history," DeGruen said.

But Omaha political leaders have often viewed the collection not as a valuable legacy to the community, but rather as one large, piggy bank. In the 1960s, the American Numismatic Society approached Omaha about locating their national headquarters here, in part because of the collection. The proposed site was north of Joslyn Art Museum. The city declined the opportunity, saying the street needed to be kept clear for Central High School. That street has since been filled in by the Joslyn's expansion.

The city began laying plans for building a new downtown public library in 1972; the idea was raised of selling the collection for funding. Vigorous public outcry blocked the sale and the plan was derailed.

Recognizing the collection's value, the Peter Kiewit Foundation gave

\$900,000 to the Western Heritage Museum, stipulating that an exhibit be constructed to house the collection. The museum did not appropriately fulfill its obligation. Older, rather than state-of-the-art, facilities were used in the design of the exhibit area. The result was inadequate space, poor lighting and outdated security measures.

Sadly, the mistreatment started at the very location Reed willed for his collection, the old Omaha Library at the corner of 19th & Harney Streets.

Kept on the library's top floor, the collection was readily accessible to the public; schools often took field trips there. But library personnel considered the collection a nuisance and a burden. It took up space; employees would have to stand watch when citizens came for viewing. Following two failed burglary attempts, the collection was locked in a vault in 1965.

Ten years later, a young boy began selling rare, valuable coins to Omaha dealers, one of whom was Leonard Owen, past president of the Central States Numismatic Society. Familiar with the collection, Owen made inquiries and discovered the boy had found a shoebox full of coins in the library and had simply walked out the door with them. A collection valued by some experts at \$12 million was being stored in cigar and shoe boxes.

Concerned local numismatists formed the Byron Reed Historical Society, spending five years and thousands of hours inventorying and cataloging the collection's numismatic contents. Owen was heartsick at what they discovered.

"The collection had been poorly cared for. Coins had been mounted using museum wax and scratched when polished. Paper currency was faded from sunlight exposure. Damage, caused by naive mishandling and apathetic neglect, amounted to tens of thousands of dollars," he said.

There was also a discrepancy among numbers indicating "lots of mysterious disappearances," Owen said, including the fact that most of the paper money in the collection was no longer there.

The society contacted DeGruen, a leading manuscript authority, to examine the non-numismatic portion of the Collection.

"I had never heard of the Byron Reed Collection and was simply astounded. It remains one of the most amazing treasures ever lost to scholarship," DeGruen said. He also found items damaged and missing.

More than 105 years after being given to the city as a gift, the collection still is not revered with the integrity and dignity it deserves. In a recent article, Eve Weipert, former curator of collections at Western Heritage Museum, wrote: "It's an extraordinary and unique inheritance for the people of Omaha, a treasure legacy that is rich in history and remains a remarkable, priceless connection to the past."

It is a statement that, while true, is made in direct juxtaposition to Western Heritage's treatment of the collection.



Getting - it  
relative zero

by Deborah Deitering

## Profit Illegally From YOUR Uncatalogued Collection

Displays are not rotated; coin and display tags have slipped from position. "Removed for Research" signs signal several missing artifacts. How can these be empty spaces with thousands of items in storage?

Mary Jo Miller, a collections assistant at the museum, is overseeing the collection until Weipert's replacement is named. She said that the original plans called for the timely rotation of displays, and she is unsure why that hasn't been done. She said the current exhibit has "suffered" from being on display for such a long time.

The museum also has failed to improve, protect and market the collection. For example, local electricians have offered alternatives to the dim lighting; their suggestions were not investigated.

The museum contacted DeGruen three years ago for an appraisal of the manuscripts, finding it impossible without a catalog of contents. The city had not bothered to inventory the manuscript portion of the collection in its 100 years of ownership. DeGruen was asked for his price for cataloging and appraising the collection. They need only "put him up," he said; he would do the appraisal for free. DeGruen never again heard from museum, he says.

There's been virtually no promotion done in marketing the collection. Few Omahans realize the contents of the collection, or even know of its existence. There's no direct marketing campaign aimed at school districts. In the higher echelons of learning, DeGruen said, the collection's existence is unknown. An announcement sent out to English, historical and scholarly journals would be eagerly and excitedly accepted, DeGruen said.

"It would create quite a stir in the academic community and scholars would want to include the materials in their research," the professor said.

Ironically, the Western Heritage Museum stands to be positively reinforced for its questionable care and treatment of this valuable asset, for the collection is up for sale and the museum is to be the benefactor.

The museum is currently involved in an \$18.9 million construction and facility project. The city has agreed to contribute \$3 million, another \$3 million is to come from the collection's sale and the balance will be provided through private resources. The city is aggressively moving forward with plans to auction the collection, despite controversy over its ethics and legality.

In a 1986 memorandum to the Mayor's Office, then-Assistant City Attorney Dan Kelso discussed legal implications in selling the collection. His findings: The city could not, legally, dispose of any part of the Byron Reed Collection. Other area attorneys concur with this statement of law. How, then, is it being sold?

The City Council voted 5-1 to sell the collection in January, and the city filed a petition for court permission to make the sale. The State's Attorney General was named the defendant in

the petition. Assistant Attorney General Dale Comer handled the case, and reported an amicable conclusion. In short, the judge asked if the sale of the collection was opposed by the state. It wasn't, and the deal was done.

Comer said District Judge Steve Davis weighed several factors, including that if the council had voted for the sale, its members would surely know if it had public support. Also, Comer noted, the sale's proceeds were to benefit the public.

Despite the legal gymnastics, the court proceeding didn't determine the legality of the collection's sale. Comer said it wasn't a question put before the court and, thus, was never an issue.

"Basically," said Omaha attorney Horace Reynolds IV, "they found people who would go along with them and railroaded it through."

Reynolds filed a suit questioning the legality of the sale as an Omaha citizen. Although the collection belongs to the public, his case was thrown out when the court decided Reynolds wasn't an "interested party." Only the Reed family could sue, but its members remain hesitant to pursue an expensive legal battle that would, in all probability, end up in the State Supreme Court.

"It's a legal nightmare," said Kelso. Without a court decision addressing the legality of the sale, the ability of the city to auction the collection remains an open question. It's possible a lawsuit could be brought after the sale and the city be found negligent for illegally gutting the collection.

A scenario has been crafted to give the appearance of due process, presumably to avoid challenges, Kelso said. He stands by his opinion that the sale would be illegal.

Alderman Frank Christensen was the City Council's sole dissenting vote in January.

"I consider selling the collection a break of faith and intent of Reed's will," Christensen said. "It was given to the city to be held in trust. This collection would be impossible to duplicate today and is a wonderful piece of priceless heritage for Omaha."

Christensen came up with an alternative plan for raising the \$3 million needed without sacrificing the collection - city improvement bonds. These bond issue funds would be allocated by the city over the next six years. Other city officials, however, were interested only in the path of least resistance. They wanted the money now. The collection is to be sold.

It remains unclear as to what parts of the collection will be auctioned. Numismatists and Reed relatives have not been consulted. Initially, the city claimed only duplicates would go to the auction block. But as Reed's will stipulated, all duplicated artifacts have reverted back to the Peter B. H.

Barrows, an Omaha librarian, verified this in an Oct. 10, 1895, certified letter: "A set of duplicate American coins was returned to Abraham L. Reed private (sic) in my term as librarian."

Assistant City Attorney Ken

Bunger has stated the only coin considered exempt from sale is the Parmelee silver dollar. He then reversed himself, saying city officials will accept any proposals for consideration, including the 1804 dollar.

"Nothing has been excluded, not specifically. The 1804 dollar isn't going anywhere, but we're trying not to prejudge. We want to get ideas and we'll listen to any suggestions," he now says.

"Don't let anyone tell you they're not selling the cream of the crop," Frank Christensen warns. Numismatist Gloria Owen agreed: "They want to net \$3 million, but they'll need to sell even more to cover auctioning costs. To get that much money, they're going to have to auction the good stuff. And if they sell the best items, why bother to keep just the junk?"

Interested auctioning companies include Sotheby's, Christie's, Bowers & Merena Galleries, Superior Galleries and Butterfield & Butterfield.

Proposals were sent out and interviews are being scheduled for mid-January. Auctioning is set for the fall of 1996.

Of the \$3 million the Western Heritage Museum is to receive from the collection's sale, \$300,000 will go for new exhibits with the balance going toward environmental controls like heating, air conditioning and humidifiers.

City actions aside, it is surprising Western Heritage Museum would accept money from the collection's sale. According to the Dec. 3, 1994, *Journal Amherst*, "Museums hold works in their collections in public trust and aren't supposed to sell them - much less rare and important ones - to pay for anything but new acquisitions. This rule is stated in the code of ethics of the Association of Art Museum Directors, the leading professional organization for American art museums. Directors who violate the rule are subject to reprimand, suspension or expulsion from the association."

While the Western Heritage is not an art museum, the implications are clear. Why, then, would the museum accept money resulting from actions in opposition to widely accepted museum ethics?

Miller, the museum's overseer of the collection, responded that the collection is merely on loan to Western Heritage, and the city is responsible for its disposal. The museum has no control over the decision, she said.

That the city intends to dismantle one of our greatest educational resources is both clear and consistent. For 105 years, Omaha's political leaders have viewed the Byron Reed Collection as a disposable asset. They have refused opportunity after opportunity to care for, nurture and market this valuable asset. Although there are alternatives to gutting the collection, city leaders would rather sell it so they have a nice location to display items the city no longer possesses. Such is the short-sighted thinking of our city's leaders. Such is the legacy left for our children. ■

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## Daub Recommends Firm To Auction Reed Pieces

BY KYLE MACMILLAN  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

A portion of the City of Omaha's Byron Reed coin and document collection could be sold this fall if the City Council approves the auction house that Mayor Daub recommended Wednesday.

A five-member committee of city officials under Daub's direction chose Christie's, a New York City auction house, and its wholly owned subsidiary, Spink America, to handle the \$3.5 million sale.

Of that amount, \$3 million would fulfill the city's pledge to the \$22 million renovation and expansion under way at the Western Heritage Museum, where the collection is housed. The remaining \$500,000 would be applied to auction expenses and care of the collection.

The proposal from Christie's and Spink was one of nine received by the city. Five firms were invited to Omaha for interviews and presentations.

"It wasn't an easy choice," said Ken Bunker, assistant city attorney, "but we thought Christie's-Spink overall presented a proposal that most conformed to our objectives both for the collection and the museum and that simply did the job best."

He said the proposal most effectively met the city's goals, which included maintaining the collection's excellence and making sure it fits into the educational mission of the museum.

Bunker estimated that roughly 2,000 of the 16,000 coins, medals, pieces of paper money, books and manuscripts in the Reed collection would be sold. He said that one-fourth to one-third of the \$3.5 million probably would be raised through the sale of books and manuscripts and the rest would come from the auction of coins and paper money.

Christie's and Spink did not recommend the sale of Reed's 1804 silver

dollar, the most valuable object in the collection, said James Lamb, a Christie's vice president. Bunker said the city is not planning to sell the coin.

In addition, Lamb said the proposal does not recommend selling any of the 335 pattern coins. Some of these design prototypes were adopted and some were not. Most experts consider the patterns to be the most important part of the collection.

"It's very unlikely that any of the patterns will be sold," Bunker said.

Neither Bunker nor Lamb would discuss other details of the auction plan, which includes recommendations on ways that the collection could be exhibited following the sale.

Although the auction plan proposed by Christie's and Spink is comprehensive, both Bunker and Lamb said, it is flexible enough to include ideas from the public.

At the council hearing and in the following one to two months when a sale list is made final, Bunker said, city and auction house officials will be open to suggestions of specific objects to be included in or excluded from the sale.

The selection of Christie's and Spink and their auction plan must be approved by the City Council. Bunker said it probably will be on the council's agenda Feb. 27 or March 5. Details of the plan will be made public at a council briefing shortly before the meeting.

"We'll be fairly specific," Bunker said, "in the presentation to the council of some of the major items (to be sold), so there's no question. We'll be upfront about it. I think what we're doing will be very acceptable to many of the critics."

The auction of a portion of the Byron Reed collection has attracted nationwide interest among collectors because of its storied history. The Omaha real estate developer assembled his holdings in the 19th century and bequeathed them to the city in 1891.



DATE

2/96 - 9/96

## Council OKs Reed Auction Plan

The City Council approved an agreement Tuesday with Christie's, a New York auction house, to sell part of the Byron Reed collection.

Council members said, however, that they want to be informed of the continuing discussions between Christie's and the Daub administration about which items from the 16,000-piece collection of coins, books and autographs will be auctioned.

Council Vice President Frank Christensen pushed for a detailed list of auction items, but administration officials and the auction house assured him

that the agreement set strict parameters for choosing items to be auctioned.

They also pledged to include members of Byron Reed's family, Western Heritage Museum professionals and other interested parties in the discussions about which items would be sold.

Christie's and its subsidiary Spink America plan to auction a portion of the Reed collection in October. The city hopes to raise \$3.5 million by selling a portion of the collection, which is kept at the Western Heritage Museum. The city would use the funds to fulfill its pledge to help fund a \$22 million renovation and expansion of the museum.



Dele  
ca 2/96

## Plan Submitted to Sell 1/3 of Reed Items

BY JENA JANOVY  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Representatives of a New York auction house told the City Council Monday that they would carefully select items to sell from the Byron Reed collection while preserving Reed's legacy and collecting achievements.

The council will consider today whether to approve a proposed consignment agreement with Christie's auction house and its wholly owned subsidiary Spink America.

If the agreement is approved, Christie's would auction a portion of the Reed collection over three days in October — two in New York City and one in London — after taking some of the coins on a world tour so that collectors in Europe and Asia can see them.

The city hopes to raise \$3.5 million by selling a portion of the Reed collection, which is kept at the Western Heritage Museum. The city would use \$3 million to fulfill its pledge to help fund a \$22 million renovation and expansion of the museum. The rest would go for care

of the remainder of the collection and for auction expenses.

Some opponents of the proposed sale, particularly Reed's relatives, say the city should follow through with Reed's wishes and keep the collection whole.

Reed was an Omaha real estate developer and financier who died in 1891. His collection, which contains more than 16,000 coins, bills, manuscripts, autographs and historical documents, was bequeathed to the city.

Christie's proposal involves selling about 5,400 of the items.

Although a final list of pieces to be auctioned has not been given to the council, a number of the coins and manuscripts were identified Monday in a preliminary proposal.

Among those are five coins on display: an 1829 five-dollar piece valued by Christie's at \$300,000 to \$400,000; an 1838 five-dollar proof valued at \$200,000 to \$300,000; and an 1875 three-piece proof set valued at \$200,000 to \$300,000.

Christie's has recommended that the city also sell a 1796 quarter eagle, an 1864 quarter eagle and a 1797 small eagle half-dollar.

In all, Christie's and Spink recommended selling most or all of the 4,500 ancient and foreign coins that are in storage and judged by Christie's to be in "poor grade"; some of the U.S. coins and proofs that are in storage; and the five coins on display.

James Lamb, president of Spink, assured the council that the city would be left with the most famous coins from Reed's collection: his special collection of 335 pattern coins and most of his U.S. collection.

City officials and representatives of Christie's and Spink have not recommended the sale of Reed's 1804 silver dollar, the most valuable object in the collection.

Christie's has recommended auctioning about 350 of the 1,100 manuscripts and books, including a Washington Mount Vernon distillery ledger and an autographed manuscript of Noah Webster.

All the historical items relating to Omaha and Nebraska, anything addressed to Byron Reed and autographs of signers of the Declaration of Independence would remain in Omaha.



# Consultant Advises City To Clean Reed Collection

A consultant said Tuesday that in order to receive top dollar at auction, the City of Omaha should professionally clean the Byron Reed coin collection, which is housed at Western Heritage Museum.

L.W. "Butch" Vosloh, a coin specialist with the Smithsonian Institution, said the silver coins and many other items in the Reed collection were in poor condition.

"If they're not cleaned properly," Vosloh said, "the city won't get the price it could."

Vosloh, who works with the National Numismatic Collection at the Smithsonian, has been an unpaid consultant to the city.

Nine auction firms submitted proposals Monday to sell a portion of the Reed collection, which contains more than 16,000 coins, paper money, historical documents and manuscripts.

Byron Reed was an Omaha real estate dealer and financier who died in 1891. His collection, which was bequeathed to the city, has been valued at about \$8 million.

The city intends to sell a portion of the collection to raise \$3.5 million.

Of that amount, \$3 million would be contributed to the \$22 million museum renovation. About \$500,000 would cover the city's auction expenses and future preservation of the remaining items in the Reed collection.

## Sarpy Official Ponders Question of Courthouse

Sarpy County Commissioner Tim Gay pulled a resolution regarding the courthouse expansion off the County Board's agenda Tuesday, saying he needed more time to discuss the issue with his fellow board members.

Gay said he would probably put the item back on the agenda next week.

"I figure I'd take it off until I have more information," Gay said. "Better

## Metro Briefs

not get people in an uproar over it yet."

The board last month approved a \$5.4 million architectural proposal to expand the courthouse, and authorized its chairman to contract with a bond counsel to guide the financing of the project.

That action has stirred controversy. Some residents and at least two commissioners would like to see the cost of the project reduced.

## Dispute Over House Leads to Fast Exit

Richard Getzschman is out but not down after the latest round in a continuing fight over ownership of a house at 714 S. 30th St.

Getzschman and his wife, JoAnn, moved out of the house Monday after Robert Light, who also claims to own the house, showed up to change the locks and post "no trespassing" signs on the doors.

Light bought the property last year for \$13,000 from the Douglas County Land Reutilization Committee, which takes custody of land that has been foreclosed for tax purposes and sells it.

In August, a District Court judge ruled that Light legally owns the house. That ruling puzzles Getzschman, who says that he bought the house on a land contract in 1988 from his cousin.

When Light showed up at the house Monday, Getzschman called police.

"I told them that he was trespassing," Getzschman said. "But they called downtown and then said that, no, I was the one who was trespassing and that I had to move out. They gave me three hours to do it."

Getzschman's attorney, James Sherrets, said that even though the judge ruled for Light, there had been no legal eviction process.

Date 7/2



July 1, 1996

Mr. Ken Bunker  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Omaha  
1819 Farnam St., Suite 804  
Omaha, NE 68183-0804

Dear Ken,

I appreciate being able to view the potential sales sheet of the Reed Collection. A copy of my analysis is enclosed; you will note that I put a star in front of the items that should have been kept for the people of Omaha. This amounts to 60% of the list.

In May of 1994, shortly after the WORLD-HERALD announcement of Western Heritage's renovation, the museum sent out a copy of the announcement to its members. It stated that "The Western Heritage Society has requested the city provide some of the money for the renovation project by selling a portion of the Byron Reed Collection that is not on display." A March 5, 1996, WORLD-HERALD article states "autographs of signers of the Declaration of Independence would remain in Omaha."

Despite these statements, my analysis shows that 21 manuscripts out of the 39 on display are on the sale list. Two of the signers are on the sale list. Also, over the years, the Reed collection has been described as containing autographs of all of the Presidents from Washington through Cleveland. My analysis shows that seven Presidents would be taken from the line of succession.

Apparently, none of the books are to be sold. This means that George Washington's ledger will stay as it was not listed. However, it would not be appropriate to consider selling it since it was on display.

I wait to hear from you before I take my findings to the City Council as to the items that were not to be sold as publicly stated. It's a sad Fourth of July as we commemorate what our Founding Fathers did for us.

As ever,

Kathleen A. Best  
635 S O 93 St.  
Omaha, NE 68114

Enc



Civil War - John Mosby 10,000  
 William Clark - 9000 Lewis 8500  
 Edward Braddock 8500  
 Henry VIII 9000  
 Sam Houston 10,000  
 Jefferson 14,000  
 Lincoln Poster 17,000  
 James Monroe 52,000  
 Robt Morris 15,000  
 Wash. 32,000  
 Wash 25,000  
 Wash. 12,000  
 Wash 17,000  
 Wash 11,000  


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 241,000

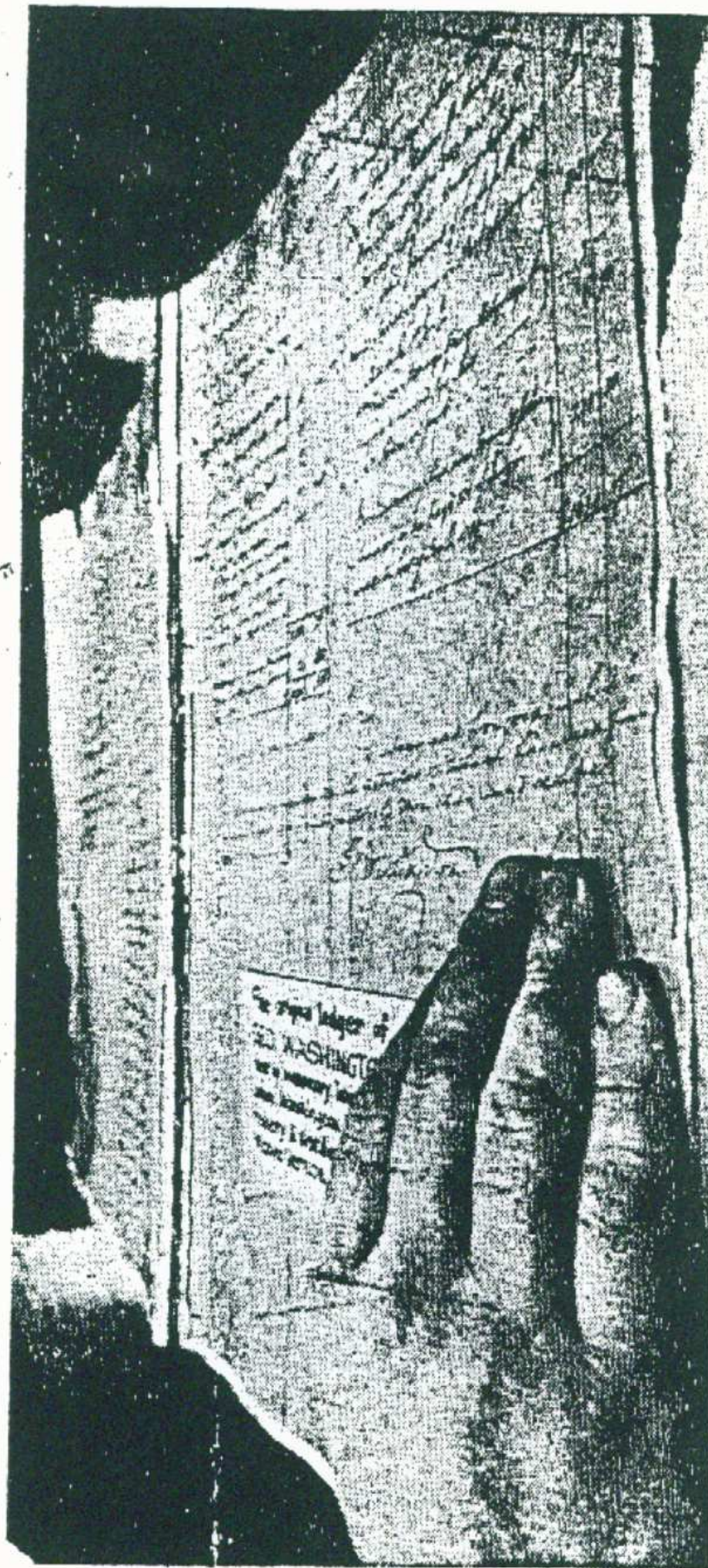
out of 727  
 14 sold for 241,000

5 Wash manuscripts 97,000  
 Distillery Ledger 30,000  


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 127,000





.. Washington's ledger was bought in 1890 for \$200.



## HIGH OF 85

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MONDAY, JULY 22, 1986

# Omaha World-Herald

## Byron Reed Auction

Sample of items to be sold and estimated auction prices:

- 1838 proof gold \$5 half-eagle (\$200,000-\$300,000)
- 1797 silver half-dollar (\$120,000-\$180,000)
- 1793 half-cent (\$20,000-\$30,000)
- 1794 George Washington letter (\$25,000-\$35,000)
- 1863 Robert E. Lee letter (\$12,000-\$18,000)
- 1795-1799 George Washington ledger (\$25,000-\$40,000)



VALUABLE COIN: 1838 proof gold \$5 half-eagle has an estimated value of \$200,000 to \$300,000.

## Ads Hype Sale of Rare Byron Reed

even more spectacular," trumpeted a Christie's press release.

The auction, which it is estimated will raise \$3.5 million to \$4.3 million, is hardly record-setting in size. But Christie's officials expect it to attract considerable interest because of Reed's storied place in the annals of coin collecting.

"It's a big deal, because Byron Reed's name is well-known and his collection is well-known. That's really why people are looking forward to this," said James Lamb, president of Spink America.

Reed, an Omaha real-estate developer and city official, became one of the country's foremost collectors in the 19th

century, accumulating more than 16,000 coins, medals, bills, books and manuscripts.

A lore has grown up around the coin collection because it was one of the few of its significance on public view earlier this century, when researchers wrote some of the first reference books on coins.

In addition, Reed took part in the famed sale of the Parmelee collection in 1890, purchasing a coveted 1804 silver dollar (just 15 are known to exist), which became the centerpiece of his collection.

About 750 documents and American coins from Reed's collection will be sold

## Deadbeat Parents Targeted

Clinton Scales Deal

## Cleanup at Western Sugar Plant in Scottsbluff



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# Revives American Ulor

which by then had a new Ulor-appointed member, to void the June election. Reed was absent in July.

"There was only one reason the meet-

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MONDAY, JULY 22, 1996

METROPOLITAN EDITION 34 PAGES

## Ads Hype Sale of Rare Byron Reed Coins

BY KYLE MACMILLAN  
 WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

One of the world's top auction houses is pulling out all the stops to promote a "landmark" October sale of a portion of the Byron Reed coin and document collection owned by the City of Omaha.

Officials at Christie's and its subsidiary, Spink America, make no apologies for trying to stimulate as much excitement as possible about the auction.

"Had this sale occurred at the time of Reed's death in 1891, it would have been a truly extraordinary event. The fact that the collection has been locked away for 105 years makes the Spink America sale

even more spectacular," trumpeted a Christie's press release.

The auction, which it is estimated will raise \$3.5 million to \$4.3 million, is hardly record-setting in size. But Christie's officials expect it to attract considerable interest because of Reed's storied place in the annals of coin collecting.

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In addition, Reed took part in the famed sale of the Parmelee collection in 1890, purchasing a coveted 1804 silver dollar (just 15 are known to exist), which became the centerpiece of his collection.

About 750 documents and American coins from Reed's collection will be sold

during a two-day sale in New York City. About 235 of the most valuable lots will be auctioned Oct. 8 in a gala event at Christie's auction room at 502 Park Ave. The rest will be sold the following day.

About 4,000 of Reed's 4,500 ancient and foreign coins will be auctioned Oct. 10 in London, which is considered a more favorable market for coins of that kind.

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*Please turn to Page 2, Col. 1*

## leanup at Western Sugar Plant in Scottsbluff

## Search Finds Large Piece





# Advertising Hype Precedes Christie's Sale of Reed Coins

Continued from Page 1

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Previews in the United States are set for Sept. 11 in Dallas and Sept. 12 and 13 in Chicago. In addition, Byron Reed sale lots will be the centerpiece of the Long Beach (Calif.) Coin Convention Sept. 18 through 22, an annual event that is

## Byron Reed Auction

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- Ancient and foreign coins: \$500,000-\$600,000
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- Five American coins from public display: \$700,000-\$900,000
- Manuscripts: \$800,000-\$1 million
- Total: \$3.5 million-\$4.3 million

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The identities of most of the lots will be made public in installments in an attempt to squeeze out as much publicity as possible. An auction catalog with scholarly background and color photographs is being assembled, and James said it should be made available about four weeks before the sale.

Other publicity efforts include a 10-minute video on the collection as well as advertisements both in Christie's in-house publications and such periodicals as the *New York Times*, the *London Times*, *American Heritage* and *South China Morning Post*.

The promotional efforts emphasize the quality of the coins as well as the fact that they have not been on the market in more than 100 years, never since Reed's death in 1891. In addition, stress is placed on the goals and mission of the Western Heritage Museum.

## Patterns, Territorials Won't Be Auctioned

BY KYLE MACMILLAN  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Two of the rarest and most important sections of Byron Reed's famed coin and document collection will not be part of the October sale of a portion of his collection.

None of Reed's 335 patterns — never-circulated coin prototypes — will be sold, said James Lamb, president of Spink America, which is auctioning the collection in conjunction with its parent company, Christie's.

"The group is unique. The patterns are truly a one-of-a-kind resource for the study of U.S. coinage development in the 19th century. No other collection in the U.S. possesses so many unique or extremely rare pieces," according to the two firms' auction outline.

The choice of Christie's and Spink America to handle the auction as well as their sale plan was approved in March by the City Council.

In addition to the patterns, none of the collection's territorial coins will be sold, including Reed's unusual pioneer gold coins such as his Dubosq and Co. gold piece.

The most valuable single object in Reed's collection, an 1804 silver dollar, also will remain in Omaha. Just 15 of these coins are known to exist. One was auctioned in 1989 for \$990,000.

"Obviously," Lamb said, "a certain amount of money has to be raised. Bearing that in mind, we tried to devise a strategy for selection, if you like, which essentially left Byron Reed's favorite coins in Omaha and left the collection as much intact as possible."

About 420 lots of American coins will be sold, Lamb said, primarily coins in rare, top condition as well as proofs — regular-issue coins minted for collectors and never circulated.

"Byron Reed was ahead of his time to a certain extent," Lamb said. "He was very picky about condition, and that was unusual at the stage at which he was collecting. And in the world of coins, condition is everything, of course, because coins are mass produced. The difference between a coin of moderate value and a coin of very high value will be the condition."

Among these selections, Lamb said, will be five lots, stars among the 300 coins that have been on display at the Western Heritage Museum. These include an 1838 gold \$5 half-eagle, the only known example in proof state. These premier lots are expected to fetch a total of \$700,000 to \$900,000.

"You've got to have something in there that not only focuses attention on the sale but also that provides big chunks of value. You have to. You just can't get \$3.5 million without doing it," Lamb said.

Altogether, the auction firms expect the American coins to generate between \$2.2 million and \$2.7 million.

About 4,000 of the 4,500 of the collection's ancient coins and foreign coins will be sold, earning an estimated \$500,000 to \$600,000. Unlike the American coins, Reed did not collect these systematically and was not concerned about condition.

Reed is believed to have been less interested in autographs and manuscripts, because he did not acquire examples of the same rarity as his coins and he did not pursue them with the same intensity.

About 110 documents in Reed's collection that relate in some way to Omaha and Nebraska will not be sold. In addition, a representative selection of Reed's collection of autographs by the signers of the Declaration of Independence will be retained, including examples by John Hancock, Benjamin Franklin and Samuel Adams.

About 350 manuscripts will be sold including a leather-bound ledger in which George Washington kept records for his plantation distillery at Mount Vernon. Together, these objects are expected to raise \$800,000 to \$1 million.



Byron Reed

## OHA Board Still Arguing Over Election



# Advertising Hype Precedes Christie's Sale of Reed Coins

BY KYLE MACMILLAN  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

One of the world's top auction houses is pulling out all the stops to promote a "landmark" October sale of a portion of the Byron Reed coin and document collection owned by the City of Omaha.

Officials at Christie's and its subsidiary, Spink America, make no apologies for trying to stimulate as much excitement as possible about the auction.

"Had this sale occurred at the time of Reed's death in 1891, it would have been a truly extraordinary event. The fact that the collection has been locked away for 105 years makes the Spink America sale even more spectacular," trumpeted a Christie's press release.

The auction, which it is estimated will raise \$3.5 million to \$4.3 million, is hardly record-setting in size. But Christie's officials expect it to attract considerable interest because of Reed's storied place in the annals of coin collecting.

"It's a big deal, because Byron Reed's name is well-known and his collection is well-known. That's really why people are looking forward to this," said James Lamb, president of Spink America.

Reed, an Omaha real-estate developer and city official, became one of the country's foremost collectors in the 19th century, accumulating more than 16,000 coins, medals, bills, books and manuscripts.

A lore has grown up around the coin

collection because it was one of the few of its significance on public view earlier this century, when researchers wrote some of the first reference books on coins.

In addition, Reed took part in the famed sale of the Parmelee collection in 1890, purchasing a coveted 1804 silver dollar (just 15 are known to exist), which became the centerpiece of his collection.

About 750 documents and American coins from Reed's collection will be sold during a two-day sale in New York City. About 235 of the most valuable lots will be auctioned Oct. 3 in a gala event at Christie's auction room at 502 Park Ave. The rest will be sold the following day.

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Of the proceeds, \$3 million would go toward fulfilling the city's pledge to help fund a \$22 million renovation and expansion under way at the Western Heritage Museum, where the collection is housed. The remainder would be used to cover the expenses of the sale and to take care of the collection left in Omaha.

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VALUABLE COIN  
gold \$5 half-eagle  
value of \$200,000

## Byron Reed At

Sample of item  
estimated auction

- 1838 proof gold (\$200,000-\$300,000)
- 1797 silver half (\$120,000-\$180,000)
- 1793 half-cent (\$20,000)
- 1794 George W. (\$25,000-\$35,000)
- 1863 Robert E. (\$12,000-\$18,000)
- 1785-1799 Gac ledger (\$25,000-\$35,000)

Estimated Auction

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- Condition rarities: can coins: \$1.5 million
- Five American: lic display: \$700,000
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- Total: \$3.5 million

# Bellevue Cuts Bus Routes With Few Riders

BY KENDRICK BLACKWOOD  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Fewer buses will rumble down Bellevue streets after mid-September.

The Bellevue City Council voted Monday to eliminate those Metropolitan Area Transit bus routes that served fewer than five riders a day.

The decision made at least one rider happy and was termed "a start" by Councilman Ed Babbitt.

The city's bus contract with MAT was reviewed after Public Works Director Denny Hilfiker became concerned that the buses were tearing up Bellevue Boulevard. Hilfiker commissioned his own

## Ms. Everett Re-Enters Race

BY DONNETTE DUNBAR  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Bellevue City Councilwoman Kay Everett is back in the Sarpy County Board race.

Ms. Everett, who withdrew from the District 3 race in March, said Monday that she will run against Tom O'Hara in November. She will replace Pat Sullivan, who earlier this month withdrew his bid for the seat, citing concern about possible conflicts of interest involving his work as

said her career and family would make it difficult for her to give the board proper attention.

Ms. Everett, 50, is an account coordinator and office manager with the advertising, marketing and communications firm in Lincoln and Omaha.

Sullivan said he approved of his replacement.

"I think she is the most viable candidate out there," Sullivan said. "She has been genuinely concerned

out to the city in took Hilfiker's initial council's attention.

The changes took mid-September, that long to print the public aware coordinate with it.

Babbitt said it would continue and make more changes.

Another issue Monday was a southeast of 25th Road.

The council's preliminary plan



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**VALUABLE COIN:** 1838 proof gold \$5 half-eagle has an estimated value of \$200,000 to \$300,000.

## Byron Reed Auction

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Sullivan said he approved of his replacement.

"I think she is the most viable candidate out there," Sullivan said. "She has been genuinely concerned with the issues affecting Bellevue and

out to the city in the early 1990s, but it took Hilfiker's initiative to bring it to the council's attention.

The changes won't take place until mid-September, Dunlap said. It will take that long to print new schedules, make the public aware of the changes and coordinate with the bus drivers' union.

Babbitt said he hoped the council would continue to monitor ridership and make more changes if needed.

Another issue that drew discussion Monday was a 77-acre development southeast of 25th Street and Fairview Road.

The council approved the site plan and preliminary plat for Pilgrims Landing, which would have 202 houses and 16

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# Midlands News

## MIDLANDS INVESTMENTS

(AP) — These are the 4 p.m. EDT closing prices for the most actively traded stocks on the New York Stock Exchange, the American Stock Exchange, the NASDAQ National Market and the NASDAQ SmallCap Market. Mutual funds show the latest net asset value.

Div	PE	High	Low	Close	Change
14	14	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
15	15	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
16	16	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
17	17	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
18	18	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
19	19	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
20	20	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
21	21	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
22	22	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
23	23	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
24	24	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
25	25	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
26	26	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
27	27	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
28	28	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
29	29	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
30	30	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
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37	37	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
38	38	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
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49	49	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
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91	91	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
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93	93	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
94	94	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
95	95	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
96	96	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
97	97	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
98	98	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
99	99	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15
100	100	31.22	31.22	31.22	+0.15

## Takechi Aims to Trim Byron Reed Sale

BY VERONICA BURGHUR  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Omaha City Councilman Richard Takechi said Monday that he would introduce a resolution at today's council meeting to withdraw some of the pieces of the Byron Reed collection that have been scheduled for auction in October.

The collection has about 16,000 coins, medals, books, autographs and manuscripts Omaha Byron Reed donated to the city after his death in 1891.

Among the items that Takechi said he objects to selling:

Seven signatures from a complete collection of U.S. presidential signatures spanning the time from George Washington to Grover Cleveland.

The signature of Thomas Lynch Jr., a signer of the Declaration of Independence.

den. Lynch was a substitute delegate to the Continental Congress in 1776, and his signature is rare, Takechi said.

A document signed by explorer Meriwether Lewis.

Takechi said he is concerned because some of the items being sold are the only ones of their kind in the Reed collection. Special attempts should be made to retain these items, he said.

"I am not saying that we should stop the sale," Takechi said. "But I think that these items should be kept in our collection."

The New York auction house Christie's has agreed to sell pieces from the collection to raise between \$3.5 million and \$4.3 million for the city. Money from the auction will help the city fulfill a \$3 million pledge to pay a share of renovation.

tions at the Western Heritage Museum, where the collection is housed.

But Takechi said that Christie's assured the council that it would not sell items that would destroy the integrity of the collection or were of local historical value.

He said he didn't understand how the items he listed wouldn't be considered important to local history or essential to the collection's integrity.

Takechi said that by taking only certain signatures out of the group of presidential signatures, Christie's was "cherry-picking." He compared it to someone taking the most valuable albums of a record collection and leaving the owner with the leftovers.

Christie's could not be reached for comment late Monday afternoon.

## Bellevue Schools to Fill Offutt Busing Gap

BY KENDRICK BLACKWOOD  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Bellevue School District will help a group of parents who have been scrambling to find a way to get their children to school after Offutt Air Force Base discontinued its own busing program.

The school board unanimously voted Monday night to allow the district to charge parents \$90 per student to transport them from the Capehart housing area to high school and back for the year.

"I just want to commend the board," said a parent. "We had very little input, but I just want to say that."

July 8 that the bus service that Offutt had provided to middle and high school students living in military housing would be discontinued. About 240 students used the free service last year. It had been offered for at least 10 years.

The reason was budgetary, said Sgt. Jim Hughes, a spokesman for Offutt. The base spent \$167,000 to provide the service last year, he said.

Hughes said Offutt officials tried until the last minute to find a way to continue providing the service.

But the late notice put parents in a bind and angered school board member Pat Jones as well.

"Most of us budget a year ahead of time," Jones said. "The base surely must have known the money is allocated

through their share of the budget. I expressed some anger over that. It's not our fault, and we're trying to solve the problem now."

The \$90 fee will allow the school district to pay the salaries of three extra drivers and pay for maintenance on buses.

In addition to the military-housing students that the base served, those from Pine Ridge and Castle Ridge housing developments will also be able to benefit from the district's service.

For a fee, the school district has provided bus service for middle school students living west of Fort Crook Road since July 1990. Last year, 100 students, or about 64 percent of those eligible, participated in the program.



OMAHA, NEBRASKA, AUGUST 14, 1986

## Items Still Bound for Auction Council Rejects Youthful Plea to Protect Byron Reed Collection

BY JENA JANOVY  
WFO-CLUB/STAFF WRITER

Omaha City Council members listened intently Tuesday night as Mayor Larry Takechi stepped to the microphone and, without any mistakes, quietly recited the names of all of the U.S. presidents.

"Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison..." Larry began in a sing-song cadence.

He'd been summoned to the stage by his father, Councilman Richard Takechi, who wanted to show the importance of U.S. history to children. Takechi also was trying — unsuccessfully — to persuade his colleagues to save seven U.S. presidential signatures and other documents in the Byron Reed collection from the auction block in October.

■ Omaha's Falkoff brewery, closed for years, is on the brink of being condemned and demolished. Page 19.

"Lincoln, Johnson, Grant..." continued Larry, barely visible behind the lectern that is usually reserved for adults. "Carter, Reagan, Bush, Clinton," he said as his father beamed. The soon-to-be third-grader finished to a warm round of applause from council members.

Councilman Takechi then fought back tears as he spoke in favor of keeping the documents in Omaha's Western Heritage Museum.

"To say that they could not go down to our Western Heritage and see a collection in the future, with presidents, is taking away from their heritage," the councilman said.

Takechi also wanted the city to keep the signature of Thomas Lynch Jr., a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and a document signed by explorer Meriwether Lewis.

But in the end, the five council members in the chamber at the time of the vote narrowly defeated Takechi's proposed resolution that would hold these documents out of a Christie's auction in New York City in October.

Takechi was joined by Councilmen Learning Lo and Paul Koneck in support of the resolution, but he needed four votes. Voting against the proposal were Lee Ferry and Brenda Council.

After the vote, Takechi and Lo changed their votes so they would be eligible to resubmit the request in the next few weeks.

### On the Block

- The city plans to put part of the collection, including seven U.S. presidential signatures and other documents on the auction block, hoping to raise \$3.5 million.
- Of the total, \$3 million would help the city fulfill a pledge to pay a share of a \$22 million renovation project at the Western Heritage Museum.
- The remaining \$500,000 would be applied to auction expenses and care of the collection.

Christie's has agreed to sell pieces from the Byron Reed collection to raise \$3.5 million. Of the total, \$3 million would help the city fulfill a pledge to pay a share of a \$22 million renovation project at the Western Heritage Museum, where the collection is kept. The remaining \$500,000 would be applied to auction expenses and care of the collection.

## Repul Put V In Spc

### Rep. Molinari Joins Barrage Against Clinton

THE BOSTON GLOBE

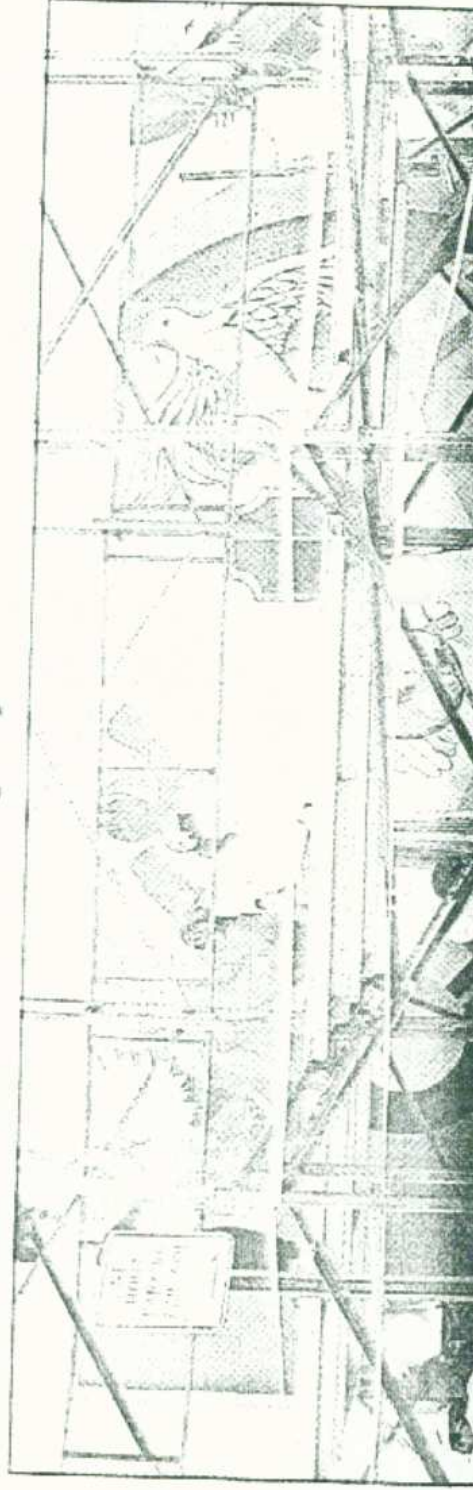
San Diego — With some of the party's most prominent women leading the charge, Republicans fired one salvo after another Tuesday night at President Clinton and hailed Bob Dole's tax-cut plan as key to more prosperity for America.

Rep. Susan Molinari of New York said in her keynote address on the eve of the GOP's convention that Republicans are the party of families, a central reason. The GOP will keep its promise to cut taxes, while Clinton will not.

"Think about Bill Clinton," she said. "He promises one thing and does another. He hopes we will forget broken promises..." Bill Clinton promises have the life span of a Big Mac on Air Force One.

The night was headlined by Rep. Molinari, Jay Bailey, Hutchinson Texas and Gov. Christine Todd Whitman of New Jersey. While much is

### Young Artists Make Their Mark in a Big Way





# Midlands News

Wednesday, August 14, 1995 Page 19

## Some Reed Items Still Bound for Auction

BY JENAJANOVY  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Omaha City Council members listened intently Tuesday night as 8-year-old Larry Takechi stepped to the microphone and, without any mistakes, quietly recited the names of all of the U.S. presidents.

"Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison..." Larry began in a sing-song cadence.

He'd been summoned to the stage by his father, Councilman Richard Takechi, who wanted to show the importance of U.S. history to children. Takechi also was trying — unsuccessfully — to persuade his colleagues to save seven U.S. presidential signatures and other documents in the Byron Reed collection from the auction block in October.

"Lincoln, Johnson, Grant ... con-

tinued as his father beamed.

The soon-to-be third-grader finished to a warm round of applause from council members.

Councilman Takechi then fought back tears as he spoke in favor of keeping the documents in Omaha's Western Heritage Museum.

"To say that they could not go down to our Western Heritage and see a collection in the future, with presidents, is taking away from their heritage," the councilman said.

Takechi also wanted the city to keep the signature of Thomas Lynch Jr., a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and a document signed by explorer Meriwether Lewis.

But in the end, the five council members in the chamber at the time of the vote narrowly defeated Takechi's

proposed resolution that would hold those documents out of a Christie's auction in New York City in October.

Takechi was joined by Councilmen Lorne Lo and Paul Koneck in support of the resolution, but he needed four votes. Voting against the proposal were Lee Terry and Brenda Council.

After the vote, Takechi and Lo changed their votes so they would be eligible to resubmit the request in the next few weeks.

Christie's has agreed to sell pieces from the Byron Reed collection to raise \$3.5 million. Of the total, \$3 million would help the city fulfill a pledge to pay a share of a \$22 million renovation project at the Western Heritage Museum, where the collection is kept. The remaining \$300,000 would be applied to auction expenses and care of the collection.

Takechi said the documents are important to local history and essential to the collection's integrity. He said the Daub administration and Christie's were "cherry-picking" key items to sell from the collection.

Assistant City Attorney Ken Bungart said a council resolution supporting the withdrawal of several items from the auction would send a message to Christie's that the city intended to breach its contract with the auction house. He said the administration fully supported the list of auction items selected by Christie's and its wholly owned subsidiary, Spunk America.

Council President Lee Terry said that it didn't really matter whether the council approved such a resolution. He said the Daub administration would carry out the auction as planned, anyway.

### On the Block

- The city plans to put part of the Reed collection, including seven U.S. presidential signatures and other documents, on the auction block, hoping to raise \$3.5 million.
- Of the total, \$3 million would help the city fulfill a pledge to pay a share of a \$22 million renovation project at the Western Heritage Museum, where the collection is kept.
- The remaining \$300,000 would be applied to auction expenses and care of the remainder of the collection.

tioned Larry, barely visible behind the lectern that is usually reserved for adults.

"Carver, Reagan, Bush, Clinton," he



OMAHA CITY COUNCIL  
AUGUST 27, 1996  
by Kathleen Best

Many people have spoken in this room today, not only before the City Council, but also before the County Board. It was our Founding Fathers who made this possible for us so many years ago.

In humble appreciation of their efforts, we should keep intact our almost-complete collection of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence. This means removing the autograph of Thomas Lynch from the auction list. We should also keep intact our collection of Presidents. This means removing seven of them from the auction list.

Then, we owe a great deal to Lewis and Clark who explored the Missouri River basin in 1804. Some historians believe that they camped on our shores near 11th and Farnam. However, the final decision is that they were on Iowa shores. Since this historic site has been taken from Nebraska, we do have something left if we keep the Lewis and Clark autographs off the sale list.

I have spent the last two years appearing before you in an effort to keep the best parts of the autograph collection in Omaha. I felt it was my duty as a citizen of Omaha and the United States. Things haven't gone well! **I REPEAT WHAT I SAID 2 WKS AGO**  
**THAT** Sixty percent of the choice items **IS** are to go. The biggest disappointment ~~was~~ that fifty percent of the autographs on display in the Reed Room are to go. The people of Omaha were deceived on this one! They were assured by the museum director and the city administration that nothing on display would be sold. However, we found out too late that nothing is binding unless its in a legal document. Many of us didn't know this!

To give us something to be happy about, I urge you to vote FOR this resolution.



I'm pleased to be here to discuss a favorite subject, the Byron Reed collection of books and autographs. It was 30 years ago that I first saw this in the old library on Harney. I've been in awe of it ever since because it contains the presence of so many people and events that shaped the history of the world.

Today, I will dwell on the collection's future. As you know, the Christie Auction house of New York has been hired by the City of Omaha to stage a \$3,000,000 plus sale ~~that will also include Reed's coins~~ Oct. 8 - 10 in New York and London. The sale will be on coins and manuscripts. The books will not be included because Christie's doesn't place much value on them because of their declining condition.

First, as to the manuscripts. Out of a total of 832, just 727 are possibilities because 105 are to stay here because they pertain to Omaha and Nebraska. There are 182 manuscripts on the list. Out of this 60% are on my list of choice items that I'd like to stay in Omaha. Let me tell you about some of the gems that will be leaving. *\*(Potential sales list)*

When the news first came out about the sale, the Director of Western Heritage and a City Attorney both stated in print that nothing on display would be sold. Yet, 51% of the manuscripts on display are on the sale list. When I confronted the City Legal Dept. about this recently, I was told that nothing is binding unless it's in a legal document. I found this very disappointing that I can't believe what I read in the newspaper. This also meant that it was alright for the sale list to contain the signatures of two Signers of the Declaration of Independence even though it had been in print for many years that the *\*(news article)* collection contained all but six of the Signers. This would put the deficit to eight. It has also been in print for many years that the collection contains the autographs of all of the Presidents from Washington through Cleveland. The sale list would take away seven of these.

Another item on the sales list as a result of not being obligated to keep everything in the Western Heritage Reed Room, is the George Washington Distillery Ledger. The 1989 appraisal on this was \$10,000. *\*(Picture of ~~map~~ ledger) + map*

As you would suppose, I was saddened by the sale list. Something good had to happen! So, last week, my husband and I had a conference with <sup>RICH</sup> Rick Takechi. He has written to the auction house to ask that the two Signers and the seven Presidents be taken off the list so



that the people of Omaha can still be the owners of 50 of the Signers and all of the Presidents through Cleveland. Rich also approved when we told him we had contacted the director of Mount Vernon and told him about the George Washington ledger that would be auctioned and that we hoped Mount Vernon could buy it direct from the City of Omaha. By now, our Mayor Daub has received a proposal from Mount vernon. \* (Letter - Read copy)

As to the books that won't be sold, the list is very interesting. The 1989 appraisal on some of them is astounding — \* (List about 12 from collection)

In conclusion, my hope for the future is that Western Heritage pays more attention to the collection than they did in the past. The displays should have been changed three times a year in order to keep the public interested and to protect the items from <sup>too much</sup> light exposure. As it was, the same exhibits were up for six years. \* Finally, The City Council, as representatives of the people, needs to continue to ~~this collection~~ the Reed collection, which is the ~~of the people, needs to keep a watch on the people's property, the Reed Collection.~~ people's property.

\* I also hope that a supervised study area will be developed for qualified scholars, making it like a Rare Book Library.



LESS THAN CLEAR

Omaha Council Bluffs: Fair tonight; patchy fog by Thursday morning. Otherwise partly cloudy Thursday. Low tonight 64. High Thursday 60.

OMAHA, NEBRASKA VOL. 131, NO. 280

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28, 1996

## 10 Signatures to Stay in Reed Collection

BY JENAJANOVY  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

A majority of Omaha City Council members agreed Tuesday that the city should keep 10 signatures penned by U.S. presidents, explorers Lewis and Clark and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The signatures are part of the city's Byron Reed collection.

At the urging of Councilman Richard Takechi, the council voted 5-2 to approve a resolution asking that the signatures be withdrawn from an October auction in New York City. Council members Lee Terry and Brenda Council voted no. The council had rejected Takechi's request Aug. 13.

Wednesday, Mayor Daub's administration was weighing the request and the potential impact on the auction.

A spokesman for Christie's auction

■ The City Council approves a property-tax rate cut. Midlands, Page 17.

house in New York City, which is handling the Byron Reed sale for the City of Omaha, said, "This is a matter that is being determined within city government, and it is premature for us to comment at this time."

Christie's has agreed to sell pieces from the Byron Reed collection to raise \$3.5 million to \$4.3 million.

Of the total, \$3 million would help the city fulfill a pledge to pay a share of a \$22 million renovation project at the Western Heritage Museum, where the collection is kept. The remaining \$900,000 would be applied to auction expenses and care of the collection.

Brinker Harding, the mayor's aide for economic development, said the administration needed to talk to Christie's and

determine the financial consequences of removing items from the sale.

"What we don't want to do is diminish the interest and enthusiasm that is, and could be, generated for the sale," Harding said. "We were trying all along to take the least number of items, in concert with the idea that you want to generate the most enthusiasm and interest in the sale without disturbing the integrity of the collection."

The Christie's sale will be held Oct. 8 and 9 in New York and Oct. 10 in London.

Ken Bunker, an assistant city attorney, said Christie's already has printed a catalog of sale items, including those the council voted Tuesday to withdraw.

Takechi's resolution calls for the city to withhold documents that include signatures from Thomas Lynch Jr., a signer of the Declaration of Independence;

explorers William Clark and Meriwether Lewis; and Presidents James Madison, William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, James Polk, Millard Fillmore, James Garfield and Chester Arthur.

Takechi had argued that the items were important to Reed and therefore should be important for the city to retain. Takechi also said that Lynch's signature was rare and that William Clark and Meriwether Lewis were important explorers with ties to Nebraska.

Reed was an Omaha real estate developer and financier who died in 1891. His collection was bequeathed to the city. The collection contains more than 16,000 coins, bills, manuscripts, autographs and historical documents.

Christie's proposal involves selling about 5,400 of the items.

The sale has raised objections from coin collectors and Reed's descendants.

## Clinton Faster On Politics

## Democrats Formally Give Nod Tonight

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

While on his way to Chicago to watch his party formally nominate him tonight, President Clinton climbed off his campaign train to tout his environmental record and announce a plan to speed the cleanup of America's most polluted spots.

"You look at where we are. I say to you we are on the right track," he said while promoting his administration's environmental efforts before a rally of 17,000 people at Michigan State University in Lansing.

He added the cleanup plan to his list of pre-convention proposals, which he has been doling out at the rate of one a day, during a stop in Kalamazoo, Mich. The \$1.9 billion proposal aims to:





SEP - 6 1996

Universal Press Clipping Bureau

## Daub Vetoes Withdrawal Of Reed Auction Items

124 BY JENA JANOVY  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Mayor Daub on Thursday vetoed a City Council resolution that would have kept some documents in the Byron Reed collection out of a planned auction next month in New York City.

In a letter to the council, Daub said he sympathized with the effort to withdraw the items from the auction but said such a move would hurt the planned sale.

Christie's auction house has agreed to sell pieces from the Byron Reed collection to raise \$3.5 million to \$4.3 million. Of the total, \$3 million would help the city fulfill a pledge to pay a share of a \$22 million renovation project at the Western Heritage Museum, where the collection is kept. The remaining \$500,000 would be applied to auction expenses and care of the collection.

At the urging of Councilman Richard Takechi, the council voted 5-2 last week in favor of a resolution asking that the city withhold documents that include signatures from Thomas Lynch Jr., a signer of the Declaration of Independence; explorers William Clark and Meriwether Lewis; and Presidents James Madison, William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, James Polk, Millard Fillmore, James Garfield and Chester Arthur. Council members Lee Terry and Brenda Council voted no.

The council could override the veto

with five votes.

Takechi had argued that the items were important to Reed and therefore should be important for the city to retain. Takechi also said that Lynch's signature was rare and that Lewis and Clark were important explorers with Nebraska ties.

Daub said he could have supported a more limited resolution that deleted only the signature of Lynch. Daub said Takechi's resolution would "clearly have a dramatic negative impact on the original mission of getting this valuable collection out of the basement of the museum and into a proper display so that all Omahans and visitors to our city can enjoy its beauty and uniqueness."

Reed was an Omaha real estate developer and financier who died in 1891. His collection was bequeathed to the city. The collection contains more than 16,000 coins, bills, manuscripts, autographs and historical documents that are part of the Reed collection. Christie's proposal involves selling about 5,400 of the items.

The auction will be held Oct. 8 and 9 in New York and Oct. 10 in London.

"The amount of money guaranteed by the auction house would clearly be in jeopardy" by removing the documents from the sale, Daub said. "The financial impact would likely be greater than just the value of the particular pieces removed. The auction experts have indicated that, in their experience, when items are withdrawn it can diminish interest in the auction as a whole."



September 7, 1996

The Honorable Hal Daub  
Mayor of Omaha  
Omaha-Douglas Civic Center  
1819 Farnam St.  
Omaha, NE 68183

Dear Mayor Daub:

This is in regard to yesterday's newspaper article that you are vetoing the withdrawal of some of the documents from the Reed auction. Are you aware that the collection didn't get "out of the basement" at Western Heritage because the staff didn't change the exhibits. The same items were on display for six years. They should have been changed every four months as paper items shouldn't be out any longer, and this would have been more interesting for the viewing public. Also, there wouldn't have been a problem making new labels since the computer does such a quick job of it.

Are you aware that there was a good possibility of a special Reed Room exhibit in 1995 when we were celebrating the end of World War II. I had suggested that the autographs and pictures of some of the Signers would be appropriate since it was the spirit of freedom that our soldiers were fighting for. The museum didn't have a special case or the personnel for this, so I offered to fund it. It was turned down by the City of Omaha.

Are you aware that there are some disgruntled Omaha citizens who are very discouraged with Western Heritage. One lady told me she'd written to them several times in protest to the sale. She did not receive a reply and has not renewed her membership.

I would suggest this as a compromise to Richard Takechi's Resolution

KEEP IN SALE: The 2 of William Clark. (We will still have 8.)  
3 of James Garfield, not all 4.

KEEP OUT OF SALE: Thomas Lynch, Meriwether Lewis, James Madison,  
William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, James Polk  
Millard Fillmore, Chester Arthur  
1 of James Garfield

This compromise will result in a loss of about \$7,000 which I have guessed after studying some auction catalogs. The way the sale is expected to go, you will still make the needed \$3,000,000 net.



I urge you to give thought to my suggestions. I have spent the last two years trying to save some of the best parts of the collection for the people of Omaha. We all owe so much to our predecessors. We wouldn't be living the good life of today if it hadn't been for them.

Something else, the people of Omaha are sacrificing their collection so that a private museum can benefit. If the people want to see what's theirs, they have to pay an admittance fee.

As you pass by the picture of Byron Reed on the way into your Conference Room, remember that you wouldn't have this \$3,000,000 potential if it hadn't been for him. Therefore, please keep a bit of his collection themes -- The Signers and the Presidents. Also, please keep Meriwether Lewis because Nebraska might not have been known if he hadn't been exploring the Missouri.

With hope,

Kathleen A. Best  
635 SO 93 ST  
Omaha, NE 68114



# Do you know Byron Reed?

By David C. Harper

Coin collecting is not an attribute that most people would associate with someone who helped settle the West and helped build a city, but such was the nature of Byron Reed.

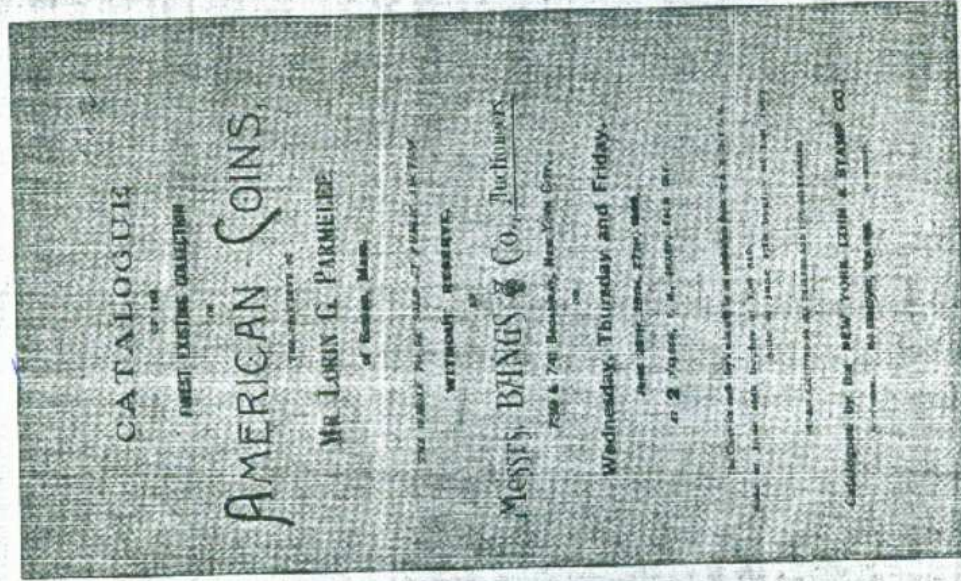
The Reed name is quite familiar to most experienced hobbyists. The famed rarities that his collection contains and that were housed for many years in Omaha, Neb., have been the stuff of many a quiet conversation between hobby devotees.

Now, as most people are aware, part of the collection, including some of the great rarities will be put on the auction block by Spink America, Oct. 8-9 in New York City.

If you are one of the many individuals who knows less about Reed than you would like, turn to Page 10 and enjoy the biography of a man who seemed to have been predestined to succeed. His interest in coins also continues to enrich the hobby more than a century after his death.

The coins themselves and their fate have excited passions that only prove how deeply rooted the man and his coins are in the city of Omaha. Byron Reed truly left his mark on the world.

Here is the title page of Bangs and Company's catalog of the Parmelee Collection, where Reed bought his example of the 1804 dollar.



## Blue Ridge honors Hendrickson

Leon Hendrickson of Silver Towne in Winchester, Ind., was inducted into the Blue Ridge Numismatic Association Hall of Fame Aug. 24 during a convention breakfast at the Northwest Georgia Trade and Convention Center in Dalton.

Presenting the award was Ed Fritz, BRNA president. He said of Hendrickson that "he was like a second father to me."

Other awards were given. See a special color news presentation about

the convention on Page 13. See editorial on Page 18.



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## Inside:

### Another doubled die

John Wexler reviews the characteristics of the latest 1996 doubled die cent. (See Page 6)

### Fivaz makes find

An 1864 large cent two-cent piece was found to have a distinct clash mark of an Indian cent on the reverse. (See Page 4)

### Ganz returns

After a hiatus of 20 years, Under the Glass by David L. Ganz returns to Numismatic News. (See Page 24)

### ANS president talks



Who's Who features American Numismatic Society president Arthur A. Houghton III. (See Page 14)

### Confederate change

The Confederacy issued just one denomination of fractional size, the



# Byron Reed – quiet man of the frontier

## Though quiet, Reed was active in Omaha's civic and economic community

*The following biography of Byron Reed was prepared under the direction of James Lamb, president of Spink & Associates. Spink America will be selling the Byron Reed collection at public auction in early October.*

Our quintessential heroes of the Old West, men like Wild Bill Hickock, John C. Fremont and George Armstrong Custer, all had a lot to say – too much in some cases.

Their garrulousness had two effects. It assured them continuing attention – this would no doubt delight them all. Additionally, though perhaps regretfully, our tendency to focus on these few colorful and effusive characters denies attention to a great many remarkable but quiet pioneers, such as Byron Reed of Omaha.

An intensely private man, Reed was regarded in his lifetime as withdrawn, even "peculiar" (today we might say shy). Yet an examination of his life will demonstrate that he was brave, generous, a brilliant entrepreneur, as well as dedicated to his family and to his adopted home of Omaha.

Many quiet men like Byron Reed established the infrastructure of the West; without them the activities of Hickock, Fremont and Clusater would have lost much of their significance. Perhaps, in the life of Byron Reed, we have the story of a real pioneer.

### Early life, 1829-1856

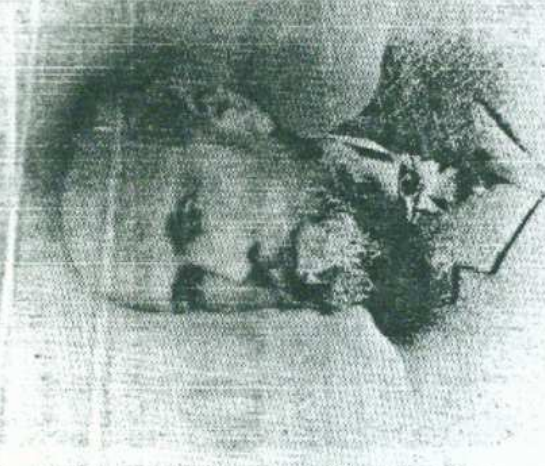
Byron Reed was born in Darien, Genesee County, N.Y., on March 12, 1829. There was a family tradition that the original Puritan "Reades" had carried to

time for the bloody "Kansas Wars" over slavery, Reed soon became, at considerable personal risk, the clandestine correspondent of the fiercely abolitionist *New York Tribune*.

When the citizens of lawless Leavenworth discovered his true occupation, an "arrest warrant" was immediately issued, but Reed was able to escape with his life – a colleague was not so lucky. This is how the near-penniless young man came to arrive in the two-year-old settlement of Omaha, Neb., in the cold winter of 1856.

### Getting started in Omaha, 1856-1862

Despite the cold, Byron Reed liked the look of Omaha and its few thousand inhabitants. He was one of the first to recognize that Omaha's position as a jumping-off point from the great Missouri River to the West practically guaranteed the city's future as a center of commerce. He set up a small real estate concern in the old Territorial Capitol and began to acquire as much "worthless prairie" as possible on the site that, he was certain, would become the metropolis of Omaha. Thirty years later he was the biggest land owner in the great city and his business was



Byron Reed

ness dealings he was regarded as entirely trustworthy and reliable. It is said that the seven giant handwritten ledgers that he filled during his years as city clerk do not contain a single error.

Not everything was serious for Byron Reed however. One night every week he took his beloved and now well-traveled violin up to the second floor of the Hamilton House Hotel where, after all the beds had been cleared aside, he provided the music at Omaha's "Weekly Ball."

### Marriage and success, 1862-1875

Perhaps he had been working a little too hard to notice, but at the start of 1867 Reed was in his 30s, living in a

Reed's landlady, under whose roof all her admirers lived. "Mr. Byron Reed," came back the answer, "because he is the one who is going to make the most money." "So I did and he did," she later related.

They were married in April of 1862. The following year, a first child was born, Maria, followed by a son Abraham Lincoln.

Mary Reed was a remarkable woman with strongly held opinions; when her young daughter began courting a Mr. Frank Johnson in 1880, Mrs. Reed ordered an end to the relationship on the grounds that Johnson "did nothing but play pool and the stock market and didn't go to church." The couple eloped to Chicago and it wasn't until the birth of Marian, Mary's first grandchild, that her daughter and son-in-law were received back into the family. Mary lived more than 50 years after the death of her husband. Shortly before her death at age 97 during the second World War, she was heard to complain that early childbearing had damaged her health!

When the Civil War ended in 1856 and the great rush West began in earnest, Omaha became a boomtown, and Byron Reed's careful real-estate speculation of the previous decade made him a wealthy man. He moved his business to a small timber building at 212 South 14th St., later replacing this with a substantial brick structure.

As his business grew, so did his reputation as a straight arrow; he was





this would no doubt delight them all. Additionally, I'd perhaps regretfully, our tendency to focus on these few colorful and effusive characters denies attention to a great many remarkable but quiet pioneers, such as Byron Reed of Omaha.

An intensely private man, Reed was regarded in his lifetime as withdrawn, even "peculiar" (today we might say shy). Yet an examination of his life will demonstrate that he was brave, generous, a brilliant entrepreneur, as well as dedicated to his family and to his adopted home of Omaha.

Many quiet men like Byron Reed established the infrastructure of the West: without them the activities of Hickock, Fremont and Clusater would have lost much of their significance. Perhaps, in the life of Byron Reed, we have the story of a real pioneer.

#### Early life, 1829-1856

Byron Reed was born in Darien, Genesee County, N.Y., on March 12, 1829. There was a family tradition that the original Puritan "Reades" had carried to New England in the first decade of the 18th century. Before his schooling was completed, the entire family, including Reed's six siblings, made the arduous trek to Wisconsin Territory, where a second Darien was founded on virgin prairie. By this time he had become accomplished on the violin and purchased an instrument of his own which henceforth went where he did.

At 20 he left home for Ohio and went to work on the telegraph, a new invention that greatly speeded the flow of information to frontier areas. Much later in his life he spoke with pride of the innovations he helped introduce during his first career.

At 26, in search of greater opportunities, he was on the move again, this time to Leavenworth, Kan. Arriving in

#### Getting started in Omaha, 1856-1862

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Mary Melissa Reed

larger than any bank in Nebraska.

By 1861, despite his retiring nature, he had embarked on a 10-year career in city government, which culminated in a spell as president of the city council. In his public service as well as his busi-

#### Byron Reed

ness dealings he was regarded as entirely trustworthy and reliable. It is said that the seven giant handwritten ledgers that he filled during his years as city clerk do not contain a single error.

Not everything was serious for Byron Reed however. One night every week he took his beloved and now well-travelled violin up to the second floor of the Hamilton House Hotel where, after all the beds had been cleared aside, he provided the music at Omaha's "Weekly Ball."

#### Marriage and success, 1862-1875

Perhaps he had been working a little too hard to notice, but at the start of 1862, Reed was in his 30s, living in a boarding house and still unmarried. He, however, together with six of the other men in his rooming house, had developed a romantic interest in beautiful 15-year-old Mary Melissa Perkins of Iowa. A photograph taken at the time of her

marriage goes a long way towards explaining why Reed and his fellow suitors were prepared to overlook her modest social position.

Her father sold supplies to settlers heading West at a place called "Mud Bottom" across the river from Omaha. Mary, however, could not decide which of her seven suitors would make the best husband. She hit on the idea of consulting with

When the Civil War ended in 1856 and the great rush West began in earnest, Omaha became a boomtown, and Byron Reed's careful real-estate speculation of the previous decade made him a wealthy man. He moved his business to a small timber building at 212 South 14th St., later replacing this with a substantial brick structure.

As his business grew, so did his reputation as a straight arrow; he was trusted with the investment and safe-keeping of more foreign capital than any other man in Nebraska. And though his political career ended, his contributions to the community continued in public and in private. He bought and

*The recession that followed Reconstruction hit Omaha hard. Byron's business, however, was now so solid that in the Reed household there was no cause for concern. . . . Byron and Mary planned and built their dream home. . . . This considerable financial commitment . . . was . . . a "ray of Hope for Omaha" in one of her darkest times.*



**THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY.**

TELEGRAMS, CABLES, AND TELEPHONE MESSAGES SENT TO AND FROM ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD. THE COMPANY IS A MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF TELEGRAPHIC ADMINISTRATIONS.

RECEIVED AT 213 South 10th Street, St. Louis, Mo. 63102

TO: *Mr. Reed*

FROM: *Mr. C. E. Smith*

MESSAGE: *Mr. Reed I recommend you to meet as essay commissioner to visit Phila. mint in Feb. - let George C. F. Henderson*

RECEIVED AT 213 South 10th Street, St. Louis, Mo. 63102

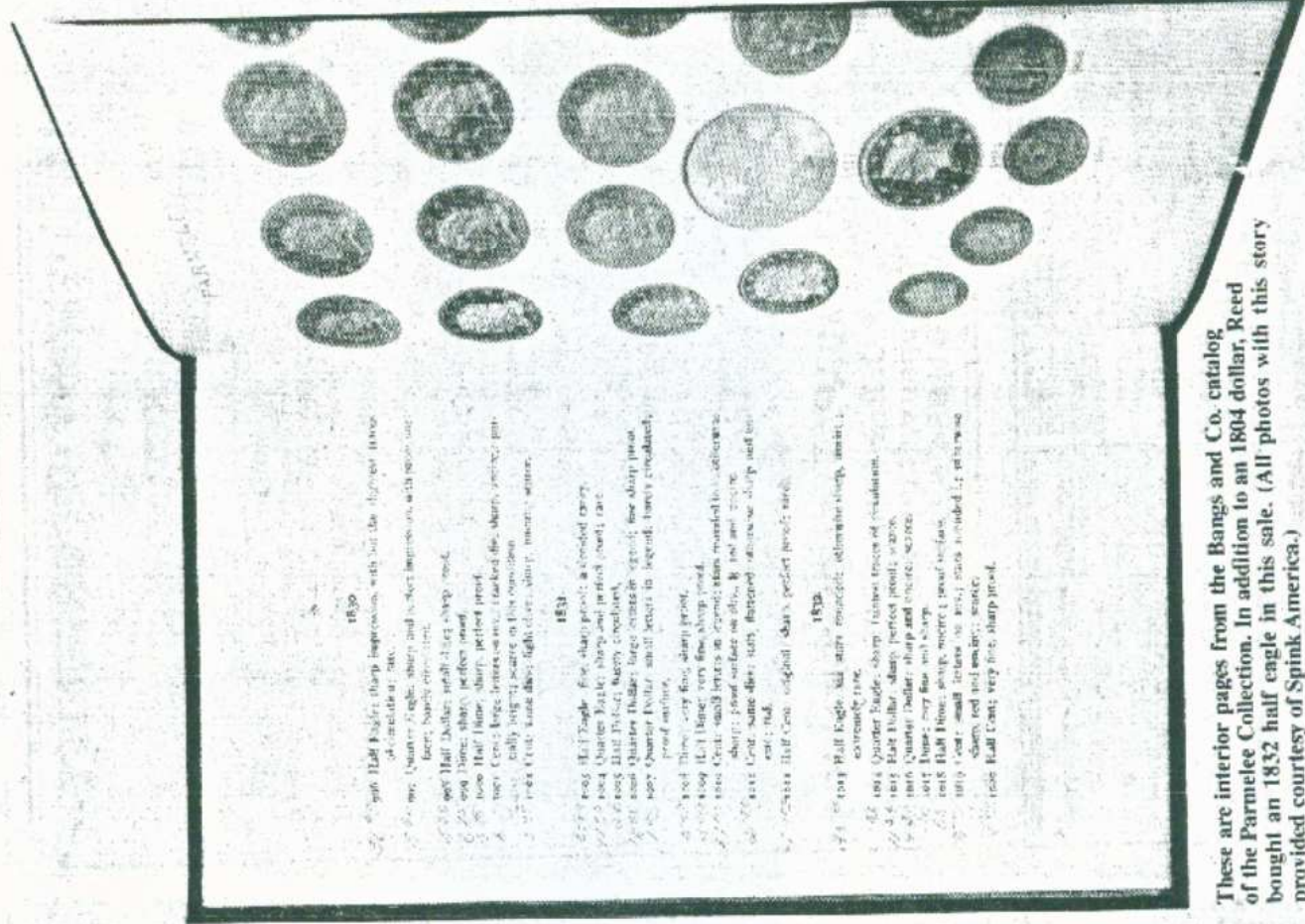
TO: *Mr. Reed*

FROM: *Mr. C. E. Smith*

MESSAGE: *Mr. Reed I recommend you to meet as essay commissioner to visit Phila. mint in Feb. - let George C. F. Henderson*

A telegram from Nebraska Senator Manderson informing Reed of his presidential appointment to the Assay Commission is shown above, and Reed's acceptance scribbled onto a piece of paper for the telegraph operator appears at right.

ORDERED BY  
Hon. C. F. Henderson, Manderson  
Thank You. If the  
appointment is made I  
will accept it.



These are interior pages from the Bangs and Co. catalog of the Parmelee Collection. In addition to an 1804 dollar, Reed bought an 1832 half eagle in this sale. (All photos with this story provided courtesy of Spink America.)

"BYRON REED PASSES AWAY"

the Fast in search of new pieces, and